Case Studies of the Church in Politics

THE POWERS THAT BE

EDMUND A. OPITZ

Foreword by
Admiral Ben Moreell
(CEC) USN (Retired)

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James C. Ingebretsen, *President*

To

The Reverend Dr. James W. Fifield, Jr.
For his valiant defense of freedom, and his resistance
to those forces which would politicalize the church

FOREWORD

THE Church is the divine society on earth; the visible church is also an institution with wealth and power and staffed by fallible men. As a human institution it is always under the temptation to render unto Caesar that which belongs to God; as a divine institution it forever struggles against this temptation. In every age a few theologians and churchmen have protested against the church's involvement with the state and its resulting secularization. In the interests of spiritual religion that protest must be made in every age. This little book carries on in that tradition.

Many of us who sense a spiritual dimension in human life and who strive for the spiritual progress of our community are encouraged by the frequently cited statistics which indicate that Americans are "going back to church" in ever-increasing numbers. But doubts arise when one asks *what they find* when they go back. And these doubts are increased when inquiry is made into the specific activities of many of the churches and churchmen and the channels into which a large part of their energies are directed.

Sometimes one wonders whether the movement "back to church" is related in any way to our basic purpose of going "forward to God". Many of our clergy have had intensive specialized training. Presumably, they are especially qualified to do those things in the realm of the spirit which are sorely needed; studying, meditating, praying, searching out ways to best meet the deep needs of man's inner life, teaching us by spoken and written word to know the moral code which should govern our relationships with God and with our neighbors, and the techniques and disciplines for learning God's will. By

and large, at the local level, our churches are meeting the needs of many people who seek religious sustenance.

But, too frequently—at official denominational and interdenominational levels—one sees these functions relegated to the category of secondary duties, to be performed only on an "if, as, and when time is available" basis. First consideration is given to "social action", which, under modern conditions, is inevitably translated into political action—"doing good" by force of law, with or without the consent of the so-called beneficiaries!

One wonders whether the dedication of the major energies of many churchmen and official church bodies to such secular activities leaves any reserve to be devoted to those spiritual functions which only the church can perform. In too many instances such actions have the effect of adding the weight of the churches to the efforts of those who are trying to reform society largely by political means, thus conferring upon such measures a pseudo-moral sanction which is entirely unmerited and grossly deceiving. These sanctions are doubly deceptive, because they purport to express the thinking and views of millions of church people whereas they actually reflect the opinions of a mere handful in the ecclesiastical bureaucracies.

In effect, the politically-motivated church is saying, "We have time and energy not only to teach men all there is to know about God, but also to teach government how to govern." I do not imply that the church should stand aloof from political or economic problems. But there is a vast difference between the church "going into politics" and the church exerting its tremendous moral influence on men's thoughts and deeds and on their efforts to achieve morally sound solutions of the economic and social problems which beset mankind. If the church chooses to function as a political power bloc, it does so at the expense of its possible moral influence.

It is deeply disturbing to many devoted laymen to see the church engage in activities which appear to support the thesis that in social relations man's law of force can be more effective than God's law of love; that "there is

nothing wrong with economics which politics cannot cure"; and that when it appears expedient to do so, the force of coercion, which overrides man's will, can safely be substituted for the force of conversion, which gains the consent of his will.

One often wonders whether the contemporary church has not endorsed the currently popular concept of the "divine right of the will of the majority", even though the record shows that, in matters of morality and social relations, the majority is often at odds with the sensitive individual conscience.

We are living in a troubled world. But our troubles have been brought down upon our heads by our own failures in the realm of morality and religion. Conscience tells men that they have committed these wrongs and they must make amends. They are yearning for the guidance and inspiration of a dynamic, militant, creative church. They are surfeited with the hollow promises of materialism. They know that "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he hath"; that if they would preserve their precious heritage of faith and freedom, that they might hand it down to their children, they must seek first "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

We look to the church to nourish the roots of liberty by teaching us the great truths of religion. Therefore, the mission of the church as it is seen by many devoted laymen is to teach us "how we can move God-ward", how we can learn more of God, of His will and His purpose. For we are convinced that with such knowledge all of our difficulties can be resolved. We want to find faith, which is the basis of all spiritual and material progress. For, without faith man yields to fear, the most destructive of human emotions, the inhibitor of worthy achievement.

So we come to the crucial question: How is the church in America to meet this challenge?

The Reverend Mr. Edmund A. Opitz is a theologian who has specialized in the religious implications of various political and economic problems. In this book he

distinguishes between the local clergyman and congregation—who together constitute the heart of American religious and social life—and the professional religionist and ecclesiastic who comprise "organized" religion. He documents the thinking and practices of the men in the denominational and interdenominational hierarchies and shows that they support principles hostile to the ideas of political and economic liberty; that they then compound this error by seeking to convey the impression that they are speaking on behalf of The Church. The church is being used to achieve the political aims of a few of its officers; and when this happens it is the duty of all who love the church, layman and cleric alike, to protest in the name of spiritual religion.

If the church becomes the religious arm of the state (or seeks to make the state its arm) it cannot provide the moral strength and leadership which these crucial times demand. We should, therefore, take a critical look at those activities which seem to be promoting, in this country, the establishment of an economic, governmental and social structure from which our forebears chose to flee!

This book vigorously challenges prevailing trends in both church and state, which would, on the one hand, politicalize the church, and on the other, clamp political controls on economic and social activities. In this area there are issues of momentous consequence for our churches and for our country, issues we cannot hold at arm's length. If we seek to postpone our decision on them, the decision will be made for us. It is an individual responsibility, first, to inform one's self, and then to become part of an informed public opinion.

ADMIRAL BEN MOREELL
(CEC) USN (Retired)
Chairman of the Board
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PREFACE

THIS volume is a study of the contemporary church's involvement in politics and political action. It is neither a history of the church-state relationship, nor a theoretical discussion of what this relationship should be. However, the author's philosophy of separation of church and state comes to the surface a number of times in the chapters which follow. It will also become evident—although to avoid confusion the distinction needs to be made clear—that the author does not interpret separation of church and state to mean that society or the nation is to be insulated from the influence of religion. It is precisely to allow religion to properly influence social relations that the churches of today must stop playing the political game.

Ends and Means

The processes of religion are one thing; the processes of politics are something else. Pure religion carries connotations of love, persuasion, conscience, contagion of example, awe, adoration, worship. Politics, on the other hand, even though it uses persuasion and propaganda, operates always with undertones of coercion and violence. If its peaceful means fail it may always fall back on its power to compel. To affirm this much is not necessarily to make an invidious comparison between religion and politics; it is to underscore the obvious fact that, not only are they different, they are radically different. If so, then considerable doubt is cast on the popular contemporary faith that religious ends can be accomplished by the use of political means.

God Wants It

The church is primarily a voluntary society brought to-

gether for corporate worship, instruction, fellowship, and the like. These are forces of attraction, not compulsion. Government, on the other hand, is society's arm of coercion. Ideally, government strives to keep the peace of society by using its apparatus of compulsion—the police, the military, courts, and jails—on those who break the peace by aggressing on their fellows. This is the realm of Caesar; it is not coextensive with the realm of God—to say the very least! But, judging by the historical and contemporary record, the boundaries of these two realms are not clear to many men; and it appears to make little difference whether they take their main perspective from one realm or the other. Politicians never fail to find some churchmen who are eager to extend the politician's domain. This has been so ever since the fourth century of our era when the Christian church became the state church, the religious arm of secular Rome, under the Emperor Constantine.

There are few more depressing chapters in the annals of man's inhumanity to man than the record, in the history of the institutionalized state church, of what has been perpetrated by Christian against Christian in the name of religion. "The untutored egotist merely wants what he wants," writes Aldous Huxley. "Give him a religious education, and it becomes obvious to him, it becomes axiomatic, that whatever *he* wants is what God wants, that *his* cause is the cause of whatever he may happen to regard as the True Church and that any compromise is a metaphysical Munich, an appeasement of Radical Evil."[1] That is why, as Dean Inge remarked with characteristic understatement, "Organized political religion has generally been a bad thing."[2]

"Our" Government

But if politicalized religion was a problem in former ages, when government seemed to belong to the emperor, the king or the oligarchy, it is much more of a problem in a

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Devils of Loudun*, p. 18.
[2] Dean Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, p. 89.

democratic environment when the government seems to be "ours." If the government appears to be "ours" so that we feel we can use it just as if it were another form of group activity—as the church and the charitable organization are group activities—then it is inevitable that some theologians will conclude that whereas in the past the state has joined forces with the church only to use it for political ends, such need not be the case in the present. Now, the theory runs, the church has in the democratic state a perfect instrument which it can use for its own religious ends. Reasoning in this fashion, many theologians have embraced the welfare state idea, whose announced aims appear to fulfill certain Gospel mandates about the responsibility of the strong for the weak. A typical example of this kind of thinking is reflected in the following quotation. The Christian will rejoice, writes Alexander Miller, "that by the mechanism of government he can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and love his brethren in practical ways."[3]

This may sound good at first, but a little thought about the nature of political action serves to point up the dangers of the barbed hooks concealed underneath this tempting bait. The Gospel injunction to care for the needy was a demand for the assumption of personal responsibility in this area; it did not include the suggestion that one man is entitled to rob a second man to help a third person. And by the same token it excludes the notion that Christian charity falls into the pattern of taxes for all in order that a few might be subsidized.

The casual acceptance of the idea that the government is "ours," and that therefore we can use it along with other things we own to serve the ends of religion, has dangerous consequences. In an effort to accomplish a small amount of what appears to be visible good, it opens the sluice gates to long run evil. There is no political evil which cannot be justified by a little dexterous rationalizing of this viewpoint.

If the ideal aim of government is justice, then the things

[3] Alexander Miller, *The Christian Significance of Karl Marx*, pp. 90-91.

which government may rightly do—as well as the sphere within which it is properly confined—are set by the moral law and not by majority rule. But if the notion that government is really "ours" becomes a settled conviction, a mood is generated which seems to permit us to do whatever we please by means of political action just because we do it with what is our own. Our every political action is then deflected away from moral norms toward expediency because whatever we want to do can be justified by saying that "we are doing it to ourselves"—although it is clear that the "we" who are doing it are seldom the same people as the "ourselves" to whom it is done. And so unwittingly we tolerate, as well as practice, invasions of personal rights and privacy such as no autocrat of the past would have dared attempt. In this matter of the tyranny of all over each, the modern world has drawn upon the reserves of a hitherto unsuspected dimension of evil. What is worse, these new theories of political action have proved so alluring that the church has been inveigled into providing them with the kind of religious sanctions which the church should lend to no form of government. "History seems to show," writes Dean Inge, "that the powers of evil have won their greatest triumphs by capturing the organizations which were formed to defeat them."[4]

[4] Dean Inge, *op. cit.* p. 138.

Before Constantine

Before proceeding to our case studies, it may be of interest to sketch a brief picture of the Christian church before Constantine, and then of the period when it became a state church, as a background for what is to follow. The quickest and least controversial way of doing this is to construct the pictures by quoting from generally accepted authorities.

In the first place, it is evident from a reading of the Gospels that Jesus did not come before man as a social reformer—which is not to deny that social principles can be deduced from his teaching about individual conduct. "Although Jesus had much to say of the Kingdom of God, and in that must have meant, if not a visible social struc-

ture, at least the relations of men to one another, he was deeply and primarily interested in individuals and saw society, customs, and institutions only as they affected individuals." So writes Professor Kenneth Scott LaTourette, perhaps the most widely respected historian of Christianity. He continues, "He declared that he had 'come to seek and to save that which was lost,' and by that he meant individuals.[5] . . . At the very beginning of his public career he deliberately spurned as an unworthy temptation the suggestion that he seek to carry through his aims by political means."[6] And as for the immediate secular background, LaTourette writes, "Augustus and his successors had not solved the basic problems of the Mediterranean world. They had obscured them. For what appeared to be a failure in government they had substituted more government, and government was not the answer."[7]

Like its Master, the early church did not confront the Roman world in the guise of a movement to reform that world. Nor is it possible, except for a special pleader like the Communist, Karl Kautsky, to maintain that the early church was a mass movement of the Roman proletariat. One of the greatest authorities of the history of the relation of Christianity to society is Ernst Troeltsch. He writes, "Early Christian apologetic contains no arguments dealing either with hopes of improving the existing social situation, or with any attempt to heal social ills; it is based solely on theology, philosophy, and ethics.[8] . . . The Christian ideal means . . . the entire renunciation of the material social ideal of all political and economic values, and the turning towards the religious treasures of peace of heart, love of humanity, fellowship with God, which are open to all because they are not subject to any difficulties of leadership or organization.[9] . . . Since God is active, creative Love, who maketh His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, so men who are consecrated

[5] Kenneth Scott LaTourette, *A History of Christianity*, p. 41.
[6] *Ibid.* 33.
[7] *Ibid.* 23.
[8] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Vol. I, p. 40.
[9] *Ibid.* pp. 48-49.

to God ought to manifest their love to friend and foe, by a generous love which will break down all barriers and awaken love in return. All this implies the need for gentleness, readiness to forgive others, willingness to serve, warmth of feeling in personal relationships, magnanimity, modesty, and forbearance."[10]

"These ideas," Troeltsch continues, "determines the form of the sociological structure. Its first outstanding characteristic is an unlimited, unqualified individualism. . . . Its basis and its justification lie in the fact that man is called to fellowship with God.[11] . . . This absolute individualism leads to just as absolute a fellowship of love among those who are united in God . . . but this fellowship only extends so far as the religious message is known. . . . There is no thought here of a humanitarian ideal in itself. . . . Thus out of an absolute individualism there arises a universalism which is equally absolute."[12]

"It is therefore clear," Troeltsch goes on to say, "that the message of Jesus is not a programme of social reform. It is rather the summons to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God; this preparation, however, is to take place quietly within the framework of the present world order, in a purely religious fellowship of love, with an earnest endeavor to conquer self and to cultivate the Christian virtues."[13] Love of the brethren comes to the fore as a guide to conduct, but it by no means constitutes the whole of the Christian ethic: "This love rests upon a religious individualistic foundation, and religious individualism is and remains the root idea."[14]

Now appears the paradox of renouncing the world to gain it. Troeltsch says, "It is a most remarkable thing that the entirely revolutionary and radical principle of unlimited individualism and universalism should adopt such a thoroughly conservative attitude to social questions (as to ignore them). In spite of this, however, it actually

[10] *Ibid.* p. 54.
[11] *Ibid.* p. 55.
[12] *Ibid.* pp. 56-57.
[13] *Ibid.* p. 61.
[14] *Ibid.* p. 70.

exercised a revolutionary influence. For the conservative attitude was not founded on love and esteem for the existing institutions, but upon a mixture of contempt, submission, and relative recognition. That is why, in spite of its submissiveness, Christianity did destroy the Roman State by alienating souls from its ideals, and it has a disintegrating effect upon all undiluted nationalism and upon every form of exclusively earthly authority.[15] . . . Christianity shattered the ancient world, both in its spirit and in its outward forms."[16]

Pomp and Circumstance

So much for the highlights of the history of the church before its marriage to the Roman State. Before this union was accomplished, however, certain institutional changes had taken place in the church itself. From a revolutionary force working within the minds and hearts of individuals, religion gradually moved outward and finally deposited the hard shell of an organized ecclesiastical system around itself. In short, the institution was already well on its way to becoming politicalized when the state, recognizing a rival, made of it an ally. The Church's open accommodation to political power took place under Constantine.

Several quotations from Jacob Burckhart's study of "The Age of Constantine the Great" will convey the flavor of this chapter in the history of Christendom.

"Within the priestly caste itself old distinctions were accentuated and new ones formed. . . . According to the importance of the See, the ambition of the persons involved, and already existing partisanships, the election of a bishop was sometimes the subject of vigorous campaigns, which in individual cases might rock the entire church. The candidate who thrust himself forward and succeeded was seldom the best man; rhetorical and political and especially financial talents, even personal influence of a most intimate nature, frequently bore off the victory over a man with a true vocation.[17]

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[17] Jacob Burckhart, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, p. 309.

"He (Constantine) therefore gave the clergy every possible guarantee of favor, even as far as a sort of participation in rule, and in return the clergy were the most devoted agents for spreading his power, and completely ignored the fact that he still stood with one foot in paganism and that his hands were over and over again stained with blood.[18]

"This rich and mighty church was not long wanting in brilliant outward show. The cult was made majestic by sumptious church buildings and an imposing ritual; the life of the higher clergy, at least in the large cities, was princely."[19]

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 310.

Religion and Freedom

In America things were to be different. Here, no man was to suffer civil disabilities on account of his religious faith. The church and the state were to be separated by an impenetrable wall; an arrangement deemed best for religion and the church, best for the state, best for everyone.

One of Thomas Jefferson's proudest accomplishments was his "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom." (1779) The opening clauses of this are well worth quoting:

> "Well aware that Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishment or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who being the Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercion of either, as was in His Almighty power to do; that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time; that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giv-

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

ing his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness. . . ."

The Constitution forbade an establishment of religion, but the dire consequences predicted by the politically-minded clergy did not materialize. Rather, the church prospered in proportion as she was free. De Tocqueville, observing this country at first hand during the 1830's, wondered how it "happened that the real authority of religion was increased by a state of things which diminished its apparent force."[17] Here, he found the "spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom" marching in the same direction, whereas in his native France they pulled in opposite directions. "The Americans," he said, "combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other."[18] The American clergy, he noted, "do not support any particular political system. They keep aloof from parties and from public affairs. In the United States religion exercises but little influence upon the laws and upon the details of public opinion; but it directs the customs of the community, and, by regulating domestic life it regulates the state."[19]

The New Departure

This volume attempts to document and survey the measure of the church's departure from its exercise of a salutary indirect force upon public life a little more than a century ago, to the present when many churchmen are trying to play power politics with the church.

I have a deep concern for the health of the church; which is what prompts this diagnosis of her present political sickness. And as for the men; there is not a one mentioned herein who does not have some qualities I admire; but I think they are tragically mistaken in the matters here dealt with. If, in the heat of indignation, I do any an injustice, I herewith make what apologies and amends I can, in advance.

EDMUND A. OPITZ

[17] De Toqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, Vol. I, p. 309.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

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Chapter I

CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM—THE UNEASY ALLIANCE

CHRISTIAN Socialism is a little more than a century old; under various labels and in different dilutions it is still very much with us. Nearly every major denomination maintains an official agency of political and social action—staffed by convinced collectivists—which tries to throw the weight of America's churches behind programs of progressive political intervention. Interdenominational agencies do likewise.

The church is an institution which proclaims love as the law of life and aims at saving the soul, the personality, the nature of man; but it is in cahoots with those who promise to improve man's material environment by political control of his economic life. Political control invariably involves the legal use or threat of violence; and no variety of collectivism or socialism—however noble its professed aims—can function without it. The fourth chapter of The Acts of the Apostles tells how the early Christion community at Jerusalem lived for a time on a share and share alike basis. This has often been described as a primitive form of socialism or communism. If one chooses he may so describe this early Christian community, but it should be perfectly clear that a voluntary pooling and sharing of consumers' goods is an utterly different kind of social arrangement than the political ownership and control of the means of production which is the essence of modern socialism, communism, and every other variety of collectivism. Modern collectivism means that some men will direct the productive energies of the vast majority of other men. This cannot be done unless the directors command the means of coercion, which in modern times

is the apparatus of the state. Thus, Christian Socialism is a curious and sterile hybrid of love and violence.

That such a union could occur at all is strange. Before the consummation took place a considerable accommodation had to be made on the religious side. The world view of the nineteenth century was not congenial to the traditional concerns of religion. Those who were infatuated with their simple-minded notions of science and its methods put their faith in a kind of practical materialism which had neither time nor place for the soul of man, or a spiritual realm, or for the Christian God. Laboratory methods did not provide the kind of net which could capture these aspects of reality, and those who believed that no other methods were available tended to ignore or deny the existence of that order of reality with which religion had claimed to put us in touch.

A full-bodied religious faith could hardly flourish in this atmosphere. There were still the churches, of course, but many churchmen—like their contemporaries—had experienced just enough exposure to religion to immunize them against the real thing. Thus there was a tendency to narrow religion down to ethics, and to emphasize social questions while playing down theology. Justice in social affairs has always been a concern of every virile religion, but never the sole or major concern. The commandment "This do" is always a deduction from the perception "This is"; the conduct enjoined upon us follows logically and naturally from our conception of the nature of ultimate reality. The refrain of the prophets is "Thus spake the Lord"; they had higher interests than the mere reform of society.

The Social Reformers

Circumstances conspired to turn many churchmen of a century ago into social reformers. The other elements of religion may have appeared unreal, but no one could deny that society was full of wrongs to be righted. God, in the view of these churchmen, was an active agent within the social order, "a guarantor of progress and the assurance of a steady movement in history toward a cooperative com-

monwealth."[1] They accepted the concept of "a social organism," from which it seems to follow that the salvation of the individual soul ceased to have meaning—there could be no salvation for the individual apart from that of "society as a whole."[2]

Whatever the grains of truth in this notion of social salvation, it does not square very well with the individualism of the Gospel ethic or the theology which that ethic implies. It is impossible to justify political control of some people by others in terms of the Gospel teaching; a secular utopia is not to be found therein. "It is because Christians think of their God as 'just in all his ways' that they can also believe that His purpose with them is to make them a new creation, not simply to let them loose on a new environment."[3]

It was in 1848 that F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and other English churchmen, launched a movement designed to vindicate for the Kingdom of Christ, as they put it, its "true authority over the realms of industry and trade, (and) for Socialism its true character as the great Christian revolution of the 19th century." This group sponsored cooperatives and founded a workingmen's college; and it provided an incentive for scores of later socialist organizations and journals in the churches of England and America.[4] A slogan once popular among Christian Socialists sums up, rather too neatly, the rationale of their program: "Christianity is the religion of which Socialism is the practice."

A counterpart movement in these United States, originating in the post-Civil War period, was called the "social gospel." C. H. Hopkins, in a sympathetic account of the rise of this one-sided interpretation of the Gospels, writes that "it involved a criticism of conventional Protestantism, a progressive theology and social philosophy, and an active program of propagandism and reform."[5]

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[1] James Dombrowsky, *The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America*, p. 44.
[2] Dombrowski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.
[3] A. E. Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, p. 190-191.
[4] See Appendix A. For details, consult C. E. Raven *Christian Socialism.*
[5] C. H. Hopkins *Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism*, p. 3.

Early Christian Socialism was non-Marxist. A rival philosopher named Marx already had his own product on the market, and took time out in his *Manifesto* to complain that "Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heartburnings of the aristocrat." Non-Marxist socialism liquidated itself, and by the turn of the century, according to Hopkins, militant social Christianity in America had become both Marxist and political. The Christian Socialist Fellowship founded in 1906 pledged loyalty to the International Socialist Movement as a means of realizing the social ideal of Jesus. Its publication, a bi-weekly entitled *The Christian Socialist,* reached at its peak as many as twenty thousand clergyman subscribers.

Within the first decade or so of the twentieth century most of the larger denominations appointed official social action agencies or commissions, but "the climax of official recognition of social Christianity was attained in the organization of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America in 1908," writes C. H. Hopkins. He continues, "social action was itself one of the important factors that brought the Federal Council into being."[6] And social action is today a major interest of the National Council of Churches, the heir of the old Federal Council.

The Pragmatists

Today there are not many doctrinaire Socialists left, in the churches or out. Socialism has been put into practice, and the results have not been up to the promise. The current mood in ecclesiastical circles is summed up by Reinhold Niebuhr in one of the least positive statements he has ever made: "We may reject all the pretensions of the 'American way of life' with its glorification of 'free enterprise' and yet not be as certain as we once were that the political control of economic life is an unalloyed good."[7] In addition to the disastrous results of trying to put collectivism into practice, the theoretical foundations of Socialism have been so badly riddled that only those

[6] Hopkins, *Op. Cit.,* p. 302.
[7] Editorial in *Christianity and Society,* Autumn, 1955.

who have never left the intellectual habitations of a couple of generations ago can feel at home with the party line. This is not to say that the modern world is not stuck with a lot of socialization on its hands; it is, and we will live out our lives in the midst of the evil consequences. Our new social order has every earmark of that servile state which Hilaire Belloc, in 1912, warned us we would get as an unwanted by-product of attempts to realize the goals of the Socialists. No brand of Socialism is now defended as an intellectually coherent and theoretically consistent system; instead these schemes are relied upon merely as practical politics or devices of sabotage. So the present strategy of the socializers, whether their motives are religious or secular, is to adopt a pragmatic approach to social problems. This is more slippery than outright collectivism.

Reinhold Niebuhr says in a recent book, "We need a pragmatic attitude toward every institution of property and government. . . ."[8] And John C. Bennett, writing about the Evanston report on a Responsible Society said, "The emphasis . . . has been on a pragmatic approach to economic problems which takes for granted a great deal of state action but which also seeks to give an important place to private centers of economic power."[9] The practical import of playing socialism by ear is to countenance political improvisation on purely expedient grounds, to the neglect of moral considerations. Thus, if it becomes politically necessary—or even feasible—to rob a minority of Peters to pay a majority of Pauls, the fact that the Pauls can deliver the votes is the determining factor. If it is politically advantageous to nationalize steel while leaving coal mines in private hands, or vice versa, no other considerations have much weight in determining policy. The idea behind the phrase, "a government of laws and not of men," was to introduce certainties and fixed points into life; it was to release men from the chronic uncertainty which is man's lot if he is at the mercy of the changing

[8] Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems,* p. 110.
[9] Article in *Social Action,* November, 1954.

whims of other men. Under a constitutional government of clearly defined and strictly limited and delegated powers a man knows pretty well where he stands. He has about as much material security under these circumstances as this uncertain life of ours allows. But to conduct social experiments using political power introduces an insecurity into every consciousness which the mass of men can less easily endure than they can endure the solid assurances of a tyrant. They will seek an escape into order, even to totalitarian order, to avoid such social chaos.

"Christian" Action

This pragmatic approach to social problems is characteristic of the organization known as *Christian Action,* a group whose leading lights are Reinhold Niebuhr and John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary and Liston Pope of Yale Divinity School. *Christian Action* stems from the *Fellowship of Socialist Christians* founded in 1932, largely around Niebuhr. This group was composed of men who believed themselves to be both Christian and Socialist, but who—to stress their primary loyalty —put the accent on Christian and made Socialist an adjective. But the Socialist faith gradually evaporated from the Fellowship of Socialist Christians leaving the pragmatic, experimental approach as a residue. The group changed its name and became *Christian Action* in 1951. Perhaps it is significant to observe—in view of the careful choice of words in 1932—that Christian is now the adjective and the stress is on action. *Christian Action,* Niebuhr writes, "knows that we are living in a mixed society in which we are frequently prompted to make common cause with people who are not Christian at all in opposition to some professed Christians. . . . Everything depends upon finding like-minded people who are in agreement with our essential objectives, whatever their motives and however much they may diverge from us on other issues."[10] This narrows things down pretty much to political action rather than Christian action, an emphasis which also ac-

[10] Niebuhr, *Op. Cit.*

cents action at the expense of thought.

It was the belief of those who launched *Christian Action* in 1951 that "liberal America needs a strong and informed voice on social policy to combat the inroads of both communism and reaction."[11] The organization's own literature states its conviction that "Protestantism needs a new understanding of the relation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to decisions on social issues, and of its own prophetic role in American society." What Christian Action-ites understand this prophetic role to be is revealed in the pages of its quarterly journal *Christianity and Society*. They conceive their task to be the finding of religious sanctions for the New and Fair Deals, to underwrite and promote the welfare state idea, to stump for the social changes that have occurred in this country during the past quarter century.

John C. Bennett, speaking on behalf of *Christian Action* says, "We accept with gratitude the results of the New Deal revolution in America."[12] Robert Fitch, dean of the Pacific School of Religion, writes, "It is part of the glory of Christian socialism in this country in the 1930's that it gave immoderate support to political measures which, applied in moderation, were part of the salvation of the nation."[13] And Reinhold Niebuhr editorializes, "The intervention of the state, not in orthodox Marxist programs of 'socialization,' but in the pragmatic terms of the New Deal, guided explicitly or implicitly by Keynesian principles, provided the necessary balances which the economic realm lacked."[14]

"Christian Action knows that the whole topography of 'left' and 'right' has changed," writes John Bennett, "that no political discussion based upon it makes any sense today. The most fateful development has been the Stalinist betrayal of the left."[15] Then, after laying down a stricture in one sentence and breaking it in the next, he

[11] Quoted in *Faith and Freedom*, November, 1953.
[12] *Christianity and Society*, Winter, 1953-54, p. 18.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[14] *Christianity and Society*, Spring, 1953.
[15] *Christianity and Society*, Autumn, 1953, p. 16.

goes on to say, "even democratic socialism is no self-sufficient solution to our problems. . . . Economic activities should be undertaken for the sake of the whole society, and economic power should be under the control of the whole society."[16] This is a typical example of the semantic confusion which is a prominent plant in every social action program. "The whole society" referred to in this sentence just quoted is actually the tiny minority of men who comprise the political agency, for it is in their hands that economic power is to be vested if the social actionists have their way. If these are "the whole society" then the other 164 million are presumably an inconsequential minority!

Camps Farthest Out

The group also labors under the delusion that it is a tiny persecuted minority, when actually its reactionary views prevail in most quarters and are accepted by the inner circles of both major political parties. Liston Pope, addressing a *Christian Action* conference, remarked that "Christian social action programs have become unique in the political field. With the virtual disappearance of the Communist left and the others who have departed the movement, the Christians who believe in social action find themselves in camps farthest out. The left, except for Christian social action, virtually has disappeared in the United States."[17] What has really happened, of course, is that the so-called left has vanished as a protest group because it has emerged as the dominant orthodoxy. In their less guarded moments the "left" admits this. John C. Bennett has written: "The leadership and many strategic centers, such as theological seminaries and church boards and periodicals, in most denominations are committed to the position that Christianity demands drastic changes in the structure of social life."[18] But although they are powerfully entrenched everywhere, the social actionists still speak in the accents of martyrdom; and in action they

[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Quoted in *Faith and Freedom,* November, 1953, p. 8.
[18] John C. Bennett, *Christianity and Our World,* p. 60.

continue to support the trend to more socialization and more political control. They do this in the name of moral values which, while they may not be exclusively Christian, are advanced as an important segment of Christian principles.

Contradictions in Terms

Before one can apply moral principles to any situation he must have some understanding of the technicalities inherent in the situation under question. A valid moral judgment is at once a judgment of fact and a judgment of value. A collectivist organization of society contains certain inherent demands and imperatives; the facts about such a social arrangement must be understood before a man can determine whether or not they conflict with his system of values. Socialism makes its immediate impact on economic life; comes the revolution and government takes over the nation's productive property—its factories, farms, banks, mines, communication system and whatever else the state decides it wants. As the owner and controller of all capital and resources, government decides what is to be produced and in what quantity, size, color, and so on. It assigns some men to work at this task, other men at that; and in what geographical area. It fixes prices and plans the distribution of goods and income. Thus government gets into business and industry in a big way; it is a monopoly producer itself in many lines, and also the major consumer of the products of industries created and sustained by government spending. Under Socialism, government is necessarily strengthened and extended to take on its multiplicity of functions. This is, of course, incompatible with the concept of a limited, constitutional government of delegated powers which was the American way in political affairs. But this is not all.

Production is only indirectly controlled under Socialism; in point of fact, people are controlled. The lives and energies of the vast majority are under the guidance and direction of those who wield political power. This is a denial, in daily and hourly practice, of the inherent right of every man to make and carry out his own peaceful

decisions, of his right to follow the dictates of his own conscience. The old idea of natural rights—which was only a secular version of the Christian idea of man—will be displaced by a theory more in harmony with practice; the theory that human beings have no rights except those provisionally lent them by the state. The person cannot be sovereign in a collectivized society, and this fact is of great significance for the thoughtful Christian. It is impossible to plan a society from the top down and still maintain that people have a right to plan their own lives so long as they accord others that same right. Human rights must be denied in theory as well as in practice in a Socialist state.

Having gone thus far, Socialist theory must take a further step. It must seek some sort of cosmic sanction for placing some men at the disposal of other men. The natural rights of man idea simply took the Christian doctrine of man and made it available for political implementation —which is not to say that every thinker who did this was within the Christian tradition, many were not. The premises, however, were Christian. It seemed natural to the eighteenth century to put a high evaluation on man because that century was the heir of seventeen centuries of effort to live up to a code in which all men were brothers in Christ. But in this code human rights were not natural so much as super-natural; that is to say, all men were to be treated as if they had inherent rights because everyone was somehow included in the purposes of the Eternal. Socialist theory must run this film backward; from a denial of the rights of persons it must go on to deny the sort of cosmic sanctions from which the rights of persons are a logical deduction. If human rights are a logical deduction from the God-concept—which I believe to be the case —then Socialist theory must logically replace the God-concept with some sort of materialism, or it must denature ultimate reality into the sum of neutral particulars, according to the philosophical fad of the day.

Thus the ideology which justifies the collectivist organization of society must logically deny the Christian

God and the Christian idea of man, as well as the limited government idea which can be deduced from these two premises. This much, Marx saw clearly. Christian Socialism is self-stultifying, a contradiction in terms.

Values in Common

Christian Socialism is a determined effort to apply Christion principles to the organization of social life. To say that it is a misguided effort is by no means to endorse the equally misguided view that religion has no role to play in society; the questions are what religion has to say about interpersonal relations and how this is to be implemented in society. "There is no force which can prevent genuine religion from seeking and finding embodiment in appropriate social forms," writes James C. Ingebretsen. "The institutions, conventions, laws, and morals of a people reflect the ultimate values they hold in common."[19] "Religion . . .," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville after his examination of American society a hundred and twenty years ago, "is the first of their political institutions."[20] If a man really "gets" religion he will not be able to keep it to himself; his neighbors are going to know about it. Any inner transformation of the person will affect his conduct one way or another. Change the basic assumptions and values on which a man habitually acts and his relations to his fellowmen cannot remain the same. It was a complaint, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, that the early Christians had turned the world upside down. This will inevitably happen to any society which contains within it a significant number of persons whose inner lives have been transformed. Not only will there be a change in personal relations in such a society, but there will be a change in institutions, customs, and conventions also. This is inevitable. "Turn a man loose who has found the living Guide within him," writes John Everard, "and then let him neglect the outward if he can."

A vigorous editorial in *Fortune,* January, 1940, pointed

[19] *The Kingdom Without God,* by Gerald Heard and Edmund Opitz, Introduction.

[20] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* Vol. I, p. 305.

to the United States as an instance of the manner in which, by a process resembling osmosis, religious values get into national life. "The United States is not Christian in any formal sense," runs the editorial, "its churches are not full on Sundays, and its citizens transgress the precepts freely. But it is Christian in the sense of absorption. The basic teachings of Christianity are in its bloodstream. The central doctrine of its political system—the inviolability of the individual—is the doctrine inherited from 1900 years of Christian insistence upon the immortality of the soul. Christian idealism is manifest in the culture and habits of the people. . . . The American owes all this to the Church. . . . He owes it to the leadership that the Church provided in the founding, settlement, and political integration of his incredibly bounteous land. . . ."

The generations who lived during the period when American institutions were taking form had no intention of leaving their religion out of their social calculations. For them, the struggle for political liberty was a mandate from their religion. Wrote de Tocqueville, "The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive of the one without the other."[21] And this is but to echo the sentiments expressed in hundreds of sermons by New England divines during the eighteenth century. A typical utterance—this one by the Reverend John Tucker—was: "All men are naturally in a state of freedom, and have an equal claim to liberty. No one by nature, nor by any special grant from the great Lord, has any authority over another."[22]

It was the age-old system of privilege which these men and others opposed; the system which grants some men the privilege of living at the expense of others. The "equality" they wanted was nothing more nor less than the abolition of privilege. A fair-sized step was taken in that direction by the writing and adoption of the Consti-

[21] *Op. Cit.*, p. 307.
[22] From *They Preached Liberty*, an anthology compiled from 18th century sermons, by Franklin Cole.

tution, an instrument containing some glaring loopholes, but also containing the means for removing these and continuing in the direction of no-privilege government. The privilege system against which the colonists revolted, theoretically and also on the field of battle, wore the trappings of monarchy and oligarchy. So decked out privilege is not tempting to modern man. The old privilege system in its modern version is Socialism or collectivism. Collectivism promises a cooperative commonwealth in which every man will be his brother's keeper; but in actual practice it must impose a pattern of petty tyranny and invasion of privacy which must inevitably result in collisions of interest between governors and governed with all the possibility of violence, bloodshed and terror which this implies. Socialism has not been betrayed by Stalin or anyone else; even in its most benign form are the seeds of despotism. Once the nature of Socialism is understood its incompatibility with Christianity is obvious.

Chapter II

THE CHURCH AND ORGANIZED LABOR

MANY social reformers, inside the church and out, pin their hopes on Labor—even though they may view flesh and blood workingmen with some distaste. The heavy-weight thinkers who have spun out Socialist theory have sought to convince us, without much inclination to practice it themselves, that only manual effort has any value. They have sought to prove that in a factory, for example, the only contribution of value is made by those who work with their hands. Those whose investments provide the tools, as well as the managers whose entrepreneurial skills and ideas direct the enterprise, are alleged to be parasites on the industrial processes whose sole motive power is brawn.

If this account appears overdrawn when stated thus baldly, it is only necessary to say that these are the submerged premises which appear to guide the formulation of opinion on the issues of labor unionism. During the past century they have warped the thinking of those in the Christian Socialist-Social Gospel wings of our churches. They have taken the sentiment, shared by every man of generous impulse, that those who toil with either head or hand be rewarded with the full fruits of their labor or the equivalent thereof and not be forced to pay tribute to anybody, and twisted it to mean the endorsement of virtually every kind of violence when engaged in by monopoly unions.

There is a considerable history of the relation between organized religion and organized labor which long antedates the recent and much publicized gift of $200,000 from the CIO's Philip Murray Foundation to the National Council of Churches. This represents about 2% of the annual budget of the Council, so it can hardly be

construed as a union effort to get into the good graces of organized religion. Anyway, such an effort at this late date would be superfluous; the unions have long basked under a special dispensation. Ever since the early years of this century, organized religion in the shape of denominational and interdenominational agencies has counted upon Labor to organize the brave new world.

The Federal Council of Churches, a parent organization of the present National Council of Churches, was established primarily to be an instrument of the Social Gospel. The men of various denominations who brought it into being discovered their common ground with each other more in politics than in religion. They shared a common social idealism but each clung to his own creed, ritual, and theology. They held to their separate doctrines and denominations, but united on economic and political matters. Some were Socialists, others favored what is now called the welfare state or a mixed economy. Christianity, in its social application meant, for them, an increasing number of government interventions and controls. The Social Gospel of fifty years ago was the seedbed of many mid-century welfare state ideas and practices.

The Tramping Hosts

A cardinal plank in the platform of the Social Gospel was the conviction that in labor union organization lay the best hope for the realization of religion's apocalyptic dream of an earthly paradise. "If the banner of the Kingdom of God is to enter through the gates of the future," wrote Walter Rauschenbush of the Rochester Seminary, the leader of the Social Gospel forces, "it will have to be by the tramping hosts of labor."[1] This highfalutin' expectation was widely shared by churchmen who organized the Federal Council of Churches as a means of putting the church in step with the aforementioned tramping hosts.

A sympathetic historian of the Social Gospel, H. F. May, writing a few years ago of its impact on American life says

[1] Rauschenbush, W. *Christianizing the Social Order,* MacMillan, 1912. p. 449.

of these churchmen, "The fullest measure of victory [for the Social Gospel] was achieved with the organization of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in 1908. In this federation, representing the liberal elements in all denominations, Social Gospel advocates were able to put American Protestantism officially and repeatedly on record in comparatively concrete terms as a warm supporter of labor's cause."[2]

This support continues. John C. Bennett, Dean of Union Theological Seminary, declares that "the large-scale economic group to which the churches during the last half century have given most support is the labor movement. . . . This interest in the labor movement has been characteristic of the national leaders of the denominations, of the Federal Council of Churches, and of others who have been most articulate in interpreting Christian social ethics. It has not necessarily represented attitudes that have been dominant within the membership of Protestant churches."[3] This last sentence suggests the actual situation in the contemporary religion-labor entente. Power-hungry men in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy who do not represent the average clergymen, much less the rank and file church member, have reached an accord with the power-hungry men in control of the huge monopoly unions who do not represent the average American workingman.

Ever since Constantine the church has been plagued by powerseekers within it. These men have adopted whatever political camouflage the occasion warranted, from monarchy to democracy. They were deaf to God's words unless He spoke according to their instructions. They put up a good case, on religious grounds, for slavery and war, and many other social evils. During the Gilded Age of the latter nineteenth century they paid nauseating tribute to the heavy-handed robber barons who loomed so large on the American scene. And now that the incidence of power has shifted so that the big social fact is "the ac-

[2] May, H. F. *The Protestant Churches & Industrial America*. c. 1949. pp. 203.
[3] Bennett, et al. *Christian Values & Economic Life*. 1954. pp. 238.

cession of the masses to complete social power," as Ortega y Gasset puts it, the powerseekers within the church attach themselves to mass movements for social revolution. An item of Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam's creed is: "I am convinced that tomorrow's world is to be labor's world."[4] If it is a fact that "tomorrow is to belong to the worker,"[5] as Bishop Oxnam elsewhere prophesies, then a church which takes thought for the morrow must come to terms with the "worker" to whom tomorrow belongs. But for the church which is at home with the concept of eternity, there is not only tomorrow, there is also next week, next year, and time beyond that which must not be compromised for the sake of an immediate success. High religion has always suffered from the efforts of some churchmen to finesse the church into endorsing, underwriting, and promoting the currently fashionable concept of society or social reform.

Now, of course, if labor's cause is the cause of all humanity, as it appears to be in the representations of its partisans in the churches and out, then all who fail to do it homage virtually excommunicate themselves from membership in the human clan. As viewed through Social Gospel lenses, "labor's cause" is the sum of everything noble and uplifting. It is the way to better housing, finer education; and it is an up-to-date way of practicing religion besides. Sarah Cleghorn wrote in a celebrated poem,

> "Ah, let no Local him refuse!
> Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.
> Whatever other be debarred,
> Comrade Jesus hath his red card."

Jerome Davis, formerly of Yale Divinity School, dedicated his book, *Labor Speaks for Itself on Religion,*[6] to the labor leaders of all nations, and went on to say, "In aiding labor they have been followers of the carpenter of Nazareth." And John Ramsey of the CIO, whose job is

[4] Oxnam, G. B. *Labor & Tomorrow's World.* 1947. pp. 150.
[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 25.
[6] Davis, Jerome. MacMillan, 1929, Dedication.

to work with clergymen, pays tribute to the labor leaders who have left the church: "I do not feel," he says, "that they lost their religion. The labor movement became the outlet for their religious zeal. To me, those men who have built the great labor unions in our country have been motivated by spiritual zeal. . . ."[7]

One more quotation in this vein will indicate why it is so difficult to discuss unionism on its merits. Its proponents see it as the Great Hope, conceived without sin and blameless in its conduct. Kermit Eby, a churchman who became an education director for the CIO, regards the labor movement as "a militant effort to bring about the age of the common man and the elimination of poverty." It is "the alternative to wars and revolutions." It "is the way to produce houses, schools, and playgrounds for happy families and healthy children. Those who stand in the way of such an achievement are sinners, and it is our task to convict them of their sin."[8] More in the same vein is to be found in the volume from which these were taken, *Labor's Relation to Church and Community,* edited by Liston Pope of Yale Divinity School from speeches delivered at the Institute of Religion and Social Studies.

In the presence of such sentiments as these, the only proper discussion may be an awe-struck silence. Simpler than discussion would be to line up all those who favor wars and revolutions, and who can't stand happy families and healthy children, and so dispose of them as to leave no mess to clean up afterward; then the world could safely be turned over to the righteous remnant. In actual fact, of course, every man of goodwill wants to see others decently housed, fed, and clothed; he wants them to be healthier, better educated, and with fewer prejudices and hates. The big question, then, is how to go about achieving these admittedly desirable ends. But this is to put the issues on the mundane level of means, operational

[7] Pope, Liston, *Labor's Relation to Church and Community,* Harper, 1947, p. 105.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 94.

procedures and techniques—than which nothing is more irritating to those working time-and-a-half against a deadline to bring in their Kingdom of God on earth. The ends we declare are not to be realized by assertion and denunciation, however fervent, but only by an intelligent employment of the appropriate means. The ends we reach are already prefigured in the means we use, and not even ecclesiastical advocates of labor unionism are exempt from this general law.

What Unions Do

To assert that trade unionism is a device for ushering in the millenium is to avoid saying what unionism really is. The person who approaches social problems from an ethical base cannot make up his mind about the right and wrong of unionism unless he understands the necessary conditions surrounding it, as well as the premises upon which it is based.

There are useful and legitimate functions that can be performed by an employee organization; such as providing members with information about the labor market, ironing out differences that arise in every form of human association, and so on. But modest services such as these, which may be performed by company unions, are scorned by the leaders of the powerful unions of the industry wide type. It is this latter type of labor organization, of which the newly-merged CIO and the AFL are examples, which is at issue in virtually all discussions of trade unionism.

Trade unionism stands or falls on its claim to raise wages. If unions do not improve the material lot of their members, then every other reason adduced for union organization has the rug pulled from under it. In modern times, the general level of wages and well being has been raised by a multiplicity of inventions of machines and industrial processes, and by the accumulations of capital which have made it possible to exploit these inventions. These things, which have made the individual worker more productive have also, for that same reason,

raised the wage level as productivity increased. The unions neither seek nor deserve credit for inventions or for accumulations of capital; what they claim is that by an organized threat or show of violence they have pried the employer off his money bags so that the share of created wealth going to the man who works for wages has increased percentage-wise. Jerome Davis voices the sentiments of many unionists when he declares that "capitalism, by its inherent nature, tends to exploit the worker."[9] The union answer to this alleged exploitation is a militant organization of the workers so that they will have the power to get their share.

Have the unions raised the general wage level as they claim? If their claim holds water, statistics should show a sharp rise in wage levels coincident with the rise of unionism to a place of power in our national life. If such an upgrading took place, the figures do not show it. The cumulative effect of statistics gathered for more than half a century reveal that the percentage return to wage earners of the total value added by manufacture has remained remarkably constant. Some spectacular and temporary gains have been made, by some unions, but at the expense of other wage earners, organized and unorganized. And often a spectacular gain prices the worker out of a job. The general wage level, as a proportion of production, has changed little over the years.[9a]

Those for whom statistics carry little weight may want to approach the problem theoretically. The only way to raise wages generally is to increase the productivity of labor—all other methods are disguised robbery. The last thing the union can claim is an interest in increased productivity. On the contrary, union strategy, based on the fallacy that the economy has only a certain number of jobs, relies on the slowdown, on featherbedding, on seniority and the like—every one a device which slows down production. From what source, then, does the union expect to draw its increased wages? Obviously, from accum-

[9] Davis, Jerome. *Capitalism and Its Culture.* Farrar, Rinehart, 1935. pp. 481.
[9a] Watts, *Union Monopoly,* Foundation for Social Research.

ulated capital. This idea stems from one of the oldest economic fallacies, the Wage Fund Theory; the theory that wages are drawn from capital. Economists of the last century and this have exploded this notion many times. Recently the job has been done again in an excellent little book by W. H. Hutt entitled *The Theory of Collective Bargaining* (The Free Press, 1954). Even without intricate analysis, a moment's thought should convince anyone that if capital is used to pay wages capital would have been used up long ago. In actual fact, of course, the amount of capital—wealth poured back into the processes of further production—has increased year by year.

The Wage Fund Theory and other union fallacies have led to the violence which is incipient in all union activity. The major union weapon is the strike. Everyone has a right to quit work, but in a strike, the workers do not simply walk off their jobs, they try to prevent fellow workers from staying on, and anyone else from accepting the jobs they have vacated. If a striking union did not have a license to use any and all kinds of violence on would-be strikebreakers it would lack the necessary and minimum condition for being a union. Shocking though it may seem to those who have not thought it through, violence is not incidental to present-day trade unionism, it is an essential part of it.

It is true, of course, that violence erupts sporadically in every society, but it is the primary function of government to help the injured secure redress. Labor union violence, however, is tolerated or sanctioned by law.

The Class Struggle

Once the nature of unionism is seen, one is led to inquire into the climate of theological opinion in which the necessary violence of union activity is rationalized. The customary rationalization is in terms of the class struggle ideology. A sample of this thinking is taken from the writings of John C. Bennett. He says, ". . . violence is itself one of the things in this world which is in the long run self defeating," but he immediately qualifies this

sweeping observation. He goes on to say that such is clearly the case in international and civil war, but that the matter is different when there is "direct action which may be acompanied by violence against a class so small in numbers that once its power of ownership is taken away it ceases to be a dangerous opposition and can be treated with moderation."[10]

Writing on the same topic, the usefulness of violence in the class struggle, Reinhold Niebuhr, also of Union, says, "The middle classes and the rational moralists . . . are wrong in their assumption that violence is intrinsically immoral."[11] In deciding whether or not to implement a policy with violence, he says the considerations are pragmatic, resting on the answer to such questions as, "How great is the immediate and less inclusive value which is sacrificed for a more ultimate and more inclusive one?" Apparently, for this theologian, there are no other than pragmatic guides, for he says, "It is well to note that even in the comparatively simple problems of individual relationships there is no moral value which may be regarded as absolute."[12]

The Only Solution

But there are many who, while they fail to see how a policy which includes deliberate violence can be squared with Christian ethics, yet have an uneasy feeling that the people who work for a living—those who were supposed to have been helped by unionism—have been the victims of injustices in the past. These more or less widely held grievances help explain why unionism got a start and why it has gone so far on so little. Unions are evil, yes; but there were also evils before the rise of the monopolistic labor organizations. What the feeling boils down to is this: Laborers felt that they were not getting full value for their services, they felt underpaid, they didn't like their conditions of work; so they grasped at anything which promised to better their condition, and this was

[10] Bennett, John C. *Social Salvation.* c. 1935. pp. 207.
[11] Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man & Immoral Society.* Scribners, 1934. pp. 170.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 174.

unionism. One may admit every count that can be made against modern monopolistic unions, but that puts him right back where we started from. How do we propose to deal with the conditions which gave rise to unionism?

This feeling is widespread, and the question is a valid one. In dealing with it we must first face squarely a fact about human nature: every person tends to evaluate himself high and then tries to get others to accept this evaluation. Thus he thinks his wages should be higher and other's prices lower; and everyone else thinks the same about him! The joker here is that every man's wage is some other man's price, and therefore the only just way to get wage and price to equate is to bargain in an atmosphere of freedom. If one party to the bargain uses or threatens to use force, bargaining gives way to robbery.

An employer and an employee bargain about wage and price, and if the bargaining takes place with no coercion on either side, the wage accepted is equivalent to the value which other people put on the wage earner's services.

This is a complicatd point in economics, but it has been dealt with neatly by the noted economist Frank H. Knight in—of all places—the symposium which makes up the first volume of the recently issued series on The Ethics and Economics of Society authorized by the Federal Council of Churches. He writes, "It is a proposition of elementary economics that ideal market competition will force entrepreneurs to pay every productive agent employed what his cooperation adds to the total, the difference between what it can be with him and what it could be without him. This is his own product in the only meaning the word can have where persons or their resources act jointly."[13] In short, each person will get his fair share, defined as what others will voluntarily offer for his goods and services, provided that there is genuine freedom.

Freedom, on the social level, is the condition which obtains when government is limited to the defense of life and livelihood, when government secures to every man alike the enjoyment of his natural rights. But every gov-

[13] *Goals of Economic Life,* Dudley Ward, editor, p. 222.

ernment, including our own from its inception, has transgressed these proper limits. Every government has invaded the liberties of its citizens, has licensed privileged groups in the nation, has failed to punish private invasions of rights. Although the American government has been more effectively limited than any other, it too has intervened wrongly in the economic life of our society —in defiance of its original principles—and operated on the premise of taxes for all and subsidies for a few. Thus no libertarian need feel an obligation to defend the economic and social practices of 1870, 1929, or any other year. An unfree society breeds injustice to the extent that freedom is impaired. A free society is a just society—meaning a society where every man receives his due and no man lives as a parasite or predator.

From this analysis it follows that a criticism of labor unionism as a remedy for social problems is to clear the ground so that the problems can be tackled on the fundamental level of human freedom. The problems of men in society will not be settled until they are settled right, and a right solution surely demands maximum freedom. In this view, freedom is remedial; it does not mean inaction. There are many ways of tinkering with society, but there is only *one solution* for social problems; and that is for men to follow the ways of freedom.

Chapter III

FOR WHOM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SPEAKS

THE Federal Council of Churches was Protestantism's major voice until 1950. In that year a new and much more comprehensive organization was launched, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. The National Council was formed by the merger of the old Federal Council with a number of nondenominational religious bodies. According to official figures, thirty denominations or communions embracing thirty-five and a half million constituents are members of the National Council, although in addition each denomination supports its own agency, or association.

The chain of command begins at the local church, which has attachments both to its local and state councils of churches and to the headquarters of its denomination. Standing over and beyond lesser councils of churches, the bureaus and officialdom of the various denominations and incorporating other religious bodies as well, is the National Council. It is a big operation, with an annual budget of close to nine million dollars. The bulk of this budget is subscribed by member churches, but the Council also solicits and obtains funds from foundations, corporations, labor unions and individuals. It is now breaking ground for its own new $14,000,000.00 office building on Morningside Heights in New York City.

The National Council of Churches can and does render desirable services on many fronts, but it is also tempted to throw its weight around in the political arena. In order to do this effectively it must convey the representation that the opinions it relays to the press, to commit-

tees of Congress, and to the President are not simply the personal opinions of the professionals on its staff but are actually the opinions of a political force to be reckoned with—thirty-five million American churchmembers.

The most urgent advocates of large ecclesiastical structures have been and are men who believe that a primary religious duty is to get the church behind various political programs of social reform. Some of these men are Socialists, others New Dealers or welfare staters. They are entitled to their views, and their right to freely utter their opinions is unquestioned. But legitimate freedom of expression does not carry so far as to give any man a license to speak for another without that other's explicit consent. Socialism, or the political ownership of the means of production, is a point of view that can be discussed and debated on its own grounds. But the ecclesiastical believers in political action get over onto indefensible ground when they try to bolster their pet schemes for social reform by claiming to be spokesmen for American Protestantism. This is an arrogant claim and a false one. But even if the claim could be justified, it is not the business of the church to underwrite and promote a political program—any political program. Because the men in the ecclesiastical hierarchy have not learned this ancient lesson, most religious controversy today has a political flavor.

On several intellectual levels there is today a revival of interest in the things of religion, but in some quarters there is serious debate as to just what those things are. A century ago an English wit said that his was the religion of every sensible man. "And what," a friend asked him, "is that?" "That," replied the wit, "is what every sensible man keeps to himself." A similar ban once assured that a man would also keep his politics out of polite conversation. But now both bars are down, and things are so up to date that the church feels it must make pronouncements on politics for religious reasons!

There are still theological differences, to be sure, but ecclesiastical leaders put their theological quarrels to one

side in order that they may address themselves with a united voice to the vexatious political and economic questions facing our world. One of the purposes, if not the main purpose, of the National Council, is to issue statements and resolutions which purport to reflect the thinking of its constituency, the thirty-five million church members of the denominations which comprise the Council. These pronouncements are not in the field of theology, but in the area of economics and politics.

The men who frame the pronouncements have had their primary training in the fields of theology and religion; here, if anywhere, is the field of their professional competence. There are still a few unsolved questions in the realm of theology, and millions of persons are still troubled and frustrated because they lack a proper framework for human values, because the human spirit goes unfed, because a life which they feel ought to be an adventure in destiny seems devoid of any meaning. To find answers to such questions as these, however they may be phrased, is the primary reason why men go to church. The place where they find answers to these questions will be their church. If they fail to find answers the historic church has failed them. The historic church of Christendom has provided answers to these and other questions for the millions who have sought answers. If the modern church does not do likewise it is because the institution is not making its faith contemporary.

By Bread First

Presumably, the effort to bring about drastic changes in the social order for reasons which are allegedly religious is an attempt to make the faith contemporary. But this attempt, which says in effect, "As soon as all people are well housed, clothed, and fed—by political means—then we can talk to them about the deep needs of the soul" is not only questionable religion, but poor economics and poor politics. Good economics and politics rest on a spiritual base, and unless man is squared away in this area—which is the immediate province of religion—he will not

better himself materially by direct action aimed at material ends.

This point—that moral and spiritual understanding must precede a sound approach to political matters—needs investigation. A noted British theologian, Christopher Dawson, put it this way: "The true social function of religion is not to busy itself with economic or political reforms, but to save civilization from itself by revealing to men the true end of life and the true nature of reality."[1] An equally noted economist, Ludwig von Mises, writing of the conditions of material progress, says, "The material changes are the outcome of the spiritual changes."[2] If this is indeed the case, the National Council might be well advised to lift its ban from the discussion of theological questions and place it instead on social problems. This the Council is determined not to do, perhaps because its leadership has as little confidence in its theology as others have in its economics!

Sound and Fury

When the church or anyone else today speaks, modern science multiplies the sound till it is heard 'round the world. But the gadget which will multiply sense in like ratio has not yet been invented. "The Church must speak" is the current rallying cry heard in the social actionist camps, and the ecclesiastical vocal chords are located in the National Council. So the churches pool their resources and make it possible for theologians to be free from the parochial duties that weigh down the average minister, and they place elaborate resources at the disposal of these men so that when they speak they will be heard. The National Council speaks, and issues a resolution condemning the Bricker Amendment. It speaks again, and issues a blast against Congressional investigating committees. The sense in these pronouncements would make a very tiny sound by itself, but when the Council speaks it purports, or seems, to speak in the name of thirty-five

[1] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, p. 125.
[2] Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action*, p. 141.

million church members. The amplifying machinery works in reverse when the sound comes from the other direction, and the roar of protest by church members against being thus used comes out the other end of the machine as a murmur.

Many of these church members are of course utterly indifferent to the doings of the National Council; some of them are in hearty accord with the sentiments expressed, while the rest are as resolutely opposed to the sentiments as they are to the highly dubious procedure of issuing statements in the name of people who have not even been consulted.

Why has this irregular and questionable procedure been adopted in ecclesiastical circles? The tactic is inexplicable unless it be assumed that in the thinking of the men who use it three premises have been accepted. First, prophetic religion is reduced to one of its ingredients, social uplift. Second, it is decided that social uplift depends on political action. Third, political action needs the guidance which can come only if the church is whipped into a political power bloc. The single-minded pursuit of these aims is hampered by any dissension over theological issues. Thus it is difficult in these days to conceive a theological position so far out of line that anyone embracing it would be ousted from his church, but the lines on political and economic questions are much more sharply drawn. A libertarian in certain ecclesiastical circles is as unthinkable as an intelligent man at a bingo table. This is not to say it does not happen, but if it does it doesn't happen long. A rough map of these circles would include the expensive seminaries, the editorial offices, and the bureaucracies of denominational and interdenominational agencies. Most of the men who staff the positions in these areas are "committed to the position that Christianity demands drastic changes in the structure of social life." Such is the boast of one of their number, and common observation bears him out. The political pronouncements issuing from these quarters go right down the line for the Welfare State.

The Directorate

A handful of men in these strategic positions constitutes what is, in effect, an interlocking directorate of American Protestantism. There are about one hundred and eighty persons on the General Board of the National Council of Churches. It might be risky to designate the pivot men who call the signals, but it is safe to say that they number less than one hundred and eighty. The names on this board turn up elsewhere as denominational officials, editors, professors, and officers in related organizations and foundations of the social uplift variety. Thus there is a tightly organized little group of people dedicated to a drastic reform of the social order, strategically placed so that they can mold religious opinion, help or hinder the advancement of a minister, and use the millions of church members as a sounding board for their views on domestic and international affairs.

The Church Speaks

Here is a typical example of how they work. The National Council sponsored a Study Conference on the Churches and World Order at Cleveland, Ohio.[4A] Materials prepared in advance by a department of the National Council came to the conference as ordinary lucubrations on foreign affairs. As far as content goes, they were changed little by passing through the conference, which attracted about four hundred people, but the ratifying action transformed the resolutions and messages into an expression of the mind of thirty-five million church members—if one were to believe the press releases. There is an ulterior motive in the passage of political resolutions—it is to use thirty-five million church members as a lever to move politicians.

This conference passed a resolution condemning the Bricker Amendment in the name of the thirty-five million, although Protestantism is as divided on this issue as it is on others. This action was engineered by a few men and played close to the vest, but the headlines which resulted may have played a part in the political calcula-

tions which helped defeat the Bricker Amendment by so narrow a margin. This was undoubtedly the result hoped for by the hierarchy. Thus, when it is urged that "The Church must speak," it is understood that the accents will be those of the interlocking directorate, directed at an audience of politicians. This kind of an audience cannot be expected to attach much weight to the intellectual substance of a pronouncement, but thirty-five million potential votes—that it can understand. In this way the Church, as a corporate entity, seeks to become a moving force in power politics, and falls into the temptation which has beset the Church in every age and against which its wisest minds have issued warnings. This is the temptation to render unto Caesar the things which are God's.

Two such warnings come from the two best minds the Church of England has produced in the last generation. The late Dean of St. Paul's, the Very Reverend W. R. Inge, declared that: "No Church ever goes into politics without coming out badly smirched. . . . We have seen the English Church in the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth centuries identifying itself too much with the landed interest, and showing small sympathy with the efforts of landworkers to secure conditions of a civilized life. And now, when power has definitely passed into the hands of the masses, we see large numbers of Churchmen repeating the same mistake under colour of rectifying it. . . . A mistake often made by religious social reformers in England is to confound the duty of every citizen to form a conscientious opinion on political and social questions, and to work, if he feels moved to do so, for the success of causes he believes, with the alleged duty of 'the Church' in its corporate capacity to take a side in controversies on which good men notoriously differ. The real object of the latter policy is to make the Church a political power, to organize a Church vote which politicians will be obliged to take seriously, to be able on occasions to make a deal with political leaders or managers. . . . This conception of the province of the Church I believe to be wholly wrong. I do not think that the political

power of any Church is often used for purely religious and moral ends. . . . It is notorious that political Christianity excites bitter hatred against the Church. . . . The choice for the Church is between political power and moral influence. We cannot doubt on which side a true follower of Christ should range himself."[3]

The late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, was an outstanding leader of the social gospel forces and friendly to Britain's Labor Party. Nevertheless he stated categorically: "It is of crucial importance that the Church, acting corporately should not commit itself to any particular policy. . . . I shall offer, in my capacity as a Christian citizen, certain proposals for definite action which would, in my private judgment, conduce to a more Christian ordering of society; but if any member of the Convocation of York should be so ill-advised as to table a resolution that these proposals be adopted as a political program for the Church, I should in my capacity as Archbishop resist that proposal with all my force. . . . The Church is committed to the everlasting Gospel and to the Creeds which formulate it; it must never commit itself to an ephemeral programme of detailed action."[4]

The interlocking directorate which seeks, through the medium of the National Council of Churches, to convey the impression that it can deliver a large bloc of votes, may believe ever so sincerely that it is working only for righteous purposes. But there are heady sensations that accompany power, and they tend to set a man's thinking askew. The ordinary practice of gilding self-interested motives with altruistic labels is stepped up with every increment of power, and raised to the nth degree in those who are able to convince themselves that they exercise power as vice-regents of the Almighty. The way the Cleveland action looked to such people is revealed in the NCC monthly house organ, *The Outlook,* for December, 1953. The editorial is entitled: "The Churches Have Spoken." It reads in part: "The churches have spoken.

[3] Dean Inge, *Christian Ethics and Social Problems,* pp. 241, 243, 244.
[4] William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order,* pp. 18-19.

They spoke through some 450 delegates at Cleveland. . . . They spoke as Christians to their fellow Christians." After a paragraph in this vein the editorial takes a new tack. "Cleveland has spoken—will the churches respond? . . . The National Council's Department of International Justice and Goodwill (which prepared all the papers ratified and resolutions passed at Cleveland, and also ran every moment of the show!) is committed to the task of translating Cleveland into word and deed." The editorial's concluding paragraph contains the punch line. "The churches have spoken at Cleveland and through them we believe God spoke." Ecclesiastics have always been under the temptation of presenting their own partisan opinions as a private revelation, and as a result are more inclined to use persecution than persuasion to carry out the project of the moment.

Most men believe that religion cannot turn its back on the common concerns of life. God is a God of righteousness, and churchmen cannot ignore the issues of freedom, justice and mercy, nor allow moral evil to go unrebuked. There is little significant difference of opinion on the point that wherever human values are involved, religion is likewise implicated. The real criticism of the directorate's political activity does not come from those who deny the relevance of religion to social and political questions. The real criticism is two-pronged; the National Council makes pronouncements on questions which are primarily technical and without significant ethical or religious content, and then it compounds this evil by attributing to thirty-five million church members views they do not hold.

Whoever attempts to raise questions about these pronouncements is accused of holding to the pietist position that religion has nothing to do with the relations between men. This may be the case with some critics, but a far larger number of religionists believe that religion does have a social application, but not the partisan collectivist application represented in the thinking of the interlocking directorate. The directorate believes that a social ap-

plication of religion is some degree of socialism; they are collectivists. Others believe that each man's freedom under God is inconsistent with a society stratified into those with political control and those controlled; they are libertarians. Collectivists and libertarians alike believe that there is a social application of the Gospels, but they differ as to what it is. Most collectivists have not yet come around to the admission that there can be any other honest answer but their own; in their eyes their infallibility stands unassailable.

Landmarks and Soundings

An example of this occurred in a recent *Christian Century* editorial on the National Council statement entitled: "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life." This statement has been in the works for a number of years and is based on earlier statements in a similar vein from the old Federal Council days. Its more moderate tone is due in part to the exchange of ideas that has been going on for the last several years between the Division of Christian Life and Work and the National Lay Committee. The Lay Committee, chaired by Mr. J. Howard Pew, numbered one hundred and seventy-nine men and women from all walks of life before its termination June 30, 1955. It had prepared an "Affirmation . . . on the Subject of Corporate Pronouncements of Denominational or Interdenominational Agencies." This was presented to the same session of the General Board of the National Council which considered the "Christian Principles" statement. The latter statement was accepted by an overwhelming vote. The proposal that the Lay Committee's "Affirmation" be printed in a pamphlet together with the "Christian Principles" statement was defeated by a vote of 77 to 41.[4a]

The *Christian Century* editorial calls the National Council's statement "a landmark for Christian thinking." The editorial goes on to say: "The first hurdle, and almost the last, which had to be surmounted was the conviction

[4a] For details, see Kingdom Without God.

on the part of some that economic life should lie outside the scope of church and National Council concerns."[5] But the editorial writer apparently had not even read that portion of the Lay Committee's "Affirmation" which he reprinted, for it says: "We believe the pervading purpose of God's will extends to every aspect of life and suggest no limitation on its application to the affairs of men. . . . However, our Committee believes the National Council of Churches impairs its ability to meet its prime responsibility when, sitting in judgment on current secular affairs, it becomes involved in economic or political controversy, having no moral or ethical content." To say that technical questions in economics and politics lie outside the domain of religion is one thing; to say that the whole of economic and political life is beyond reach of religious and moral considerations is something else again. The distinction seems to escape *The Christian Century* and others.

The effort of a few churchmen to play theocratic politics and use the Church as a means of affecting their own out-moded social reforms could, if it met with any success, inflict permanent damage on the religious life of America. Fortunately, their actions have roused opposition among men who have been brought to a renewed interest in the things of religion. The Church will continue to speak, but instead of speaking to politicians it will one day again speak to the deepest human needs. Which is as it should be.

[5] *The Christian Century*, October 13, 1954.

Chapter IV

THE CHURCHES AND THE UNITED NATIONS

THE American people are practically unanimous in rejecting the idea of a state church. They would also reject the idea of a State Department church, if that proposition were put to them. It is not put to them in so many words, but now that John Foster Dulles has become, in effect, the spiritual adviser on foreign policy to the National Council of Churches, a number of churchmen in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy are working at the job of providing the State Department with a religious arm, even though this may be far from their intentions. They seek to throw the prestige of religion and the weight of America's church members behind the current brand of internationalism; and they propagandize without ceasing for the United Nations. In the minds of the more expansive members of the official cloth, the church and the UN stand or fall together. A denominational official, writing in an official publication, has said: "These attacks on the UN—as distinguished from friendly suggestions for improving it—are attacks on the Christian faith itself."[1] Pronouncements of the National Council of Churches are usually couched in more cautious terms, but they boil down to about the same conclusion.

Churchmen individually are well within their rights in supporting the UN, and there is no questioning the sincerity of those who try to find religious sanctions for that organization. The logic of their position is quite clear, and may be framed as a syllogism: The UN is the only way to peace; the Church is for peace; therefore, the Church must give the UN its all-out support. To those who are knocked off their feet by this logic, there is nothing more to be said. If the only alternative to the UN is

[1] Herman Reissig, in *Christian Community* as quoted in *Faith and Freedom*, May, 1953.

total war, then it is insanity to criticize or oppose it. But is this the case? Many thoughtful persons think otherwise. Some persons who sincerely long for peace are critical of the UN because they fear that—despite the noble aspirations of many of its votaries—the United Nations' concept contains the ingredients for bigger and holier wars. The mentality behind the UN pumps messianic pressure into the old dream of world empire which seeks to establish one world of (our) law. This means eventual collision with a coalition of powers who want to be outside our law because they too are gripped by the delusion of one world of (their) law. These are the ingredients of religious wars, and they are of satanic inspiration.

Church and State

The church has yielded periodically to the temptation of wedding itself to a political organization, so that when the organization is discredited the church suffers. Ever since Constantine the Church has been linked in shotgun unions with the state; it has made its accommodation to secular authority, and has sometimes usurped that authority. For the first several centuries of its existence the Christian church was a fellowship of love among those united in God, a new kind of life cherished within the decaying Roman Empire. But in the fourth century an alliance was effected between church and state, and many features of the old Roman Empire survived their graft onto a stock radically different from the original. Burckhart writes that Constantine "gave the clergy every possible guarantee of favor, even so far as a sort of participation in rule, and in return the clergy were the most devoted agents for spreading his power." The Dutch theologian, Heering, dates what he calls the fall of Christianity from this period. Such a church-state relationship may be political realism in the machiavellian sense; it is not religious realism.

Rulership has never been entirely secular. Every state has had to invoke some kind of religious sanction for its operations. Political power is strengthened if the state has only one spiritual authority to deal with. Conversely,

for a church that wants to gain the whole world there is a clear advantage in gaining access to the levers by which that world appears to be moved. The disadvantages of a church-state arrangement are not so obvious. But it always sets in motion a kind of Gresham's Law of the bad driving out the good. In the long run, instead of the state becoming Christian, religion becomes politicalized. That is to say, it ceases to be religious!

World Political Order

Thus it is to be expected that proponents of a world political order along the lines of the United Nations should seek to enlist the church's support. They meet with little resistance because among churchmen there is a vague "world-mindedness" which is labelled "internationalism." The secular idea of a world political organization is also labelled "internationalism," and the two radically different concepts are mingled in a confused combination. There is true internationalism in a religion with a world missionary outreach but it has nothing to do with politics. It is similar to the internationalism of free trade, free travel, and the free exchange of ideas. But this brand of internationalism is confused with the other variety which embraces a world political organization like the UN or world federal government.

In our time ,political schemes of redemption appear to many to hold more promise than religious ones, and in this instance the "world-mindedness" of Christianity has been pressed into the service of an international political structure. "The Churches of Christ in the United States," declares Walter Van Kirk, "are committed to the establishment of a world political order."[2]

[2] Walter Van Kirk, in *The Church and Social Responsibility,* Richard Spann, editor, p. 220.
Dr. Van Kirk recently clarified his position in a letter to *The Christian Herald*: "When I refer to a 'world political order' I do not mean 'world government' as that term is generally used. I think of the UN as a form of 'world political order.' As a matter of fact, I have been outspoken in my criticism of those who seek to amend the Charter for the purpose of transforming the UN into a 'superstate.' I believe that we will make greater progress toward peace through the UN as it is, without the member states yielding to that body the national sovereignty that would be required were the UN converted into a world government."

Dr. Van Kirk is the executive director of the Department of International Justice and Good Will of the National Council of Churches. He held the same post under the old Federal Council of Churches. He has held the two jobs for thirty years. Thus, for a generation, Dr. Van Kirk's point of view on foreign policy is pretty close to that which is represented as the voice of the church. A sampling of his outlook is imperative if we wish to understand what is being foisted upon the churches as their duty toward the UN.

The sentence quoted above would be more accurate if Dr. Van Kirk had said that the spokesmen for the NCC are themselves committed and are trying to commit the churches to a world political order. "It could hardly be otherwise," he continues. "Christians are the divinely inspired propagandists of world community." It appears that, in the thought of Dr. Van Kirk and those in the NCC for whom he speaks, "a world political order" and "world community" mean the same thing. Actually, the two things are quite different; a political order presupposes community. It is one of the tragedies of our time that the faster the fabric of world community has disintegrated, the more frantic have been the efforts to patch it up with gerry-built political structures. Religion is an important factor in the building of world community, to the extent that world community is possible. Religion gave Christendom its unity; religion was noted by John Jay in *The Federalist* as one of the factors which made the thirteen colonies a union so that federal government was feasible. But the NCC spokesmen are trying to use religion to prop up the UN by making it appear that the churches are solidly behind it. "Despite differences as to theology or doctrine," says Dr. Van Kirk, "the Christian community in the United States is practically unanimous in its judgment that nation states must surrender to the organized international community whatever measure of their national sovereignty is required to establish peace and justice on a global scale." This may be the tenor of pronouncements of the NCC, but does it accurately reflect

the thinking of the thirty-five million for whom the NCC claims to speak, much less the churchmen outside the Council's orbit?

For a generation and a half it has been the fashion among intellectuals and publicists to be internationalists of the political variety, and the tyranny of fashion is a sociological fact of first rate importance. A period is characterized by certain ideas, because those who entertain ideas like to have their mental furniture in the mode. Intellectuals who live by selling words have discovered that if they want to drive a late model car they must hawk late model ideas; the market in old ideas is always slow. But the church has watched ideas and philosophies come and go. It should be relatively immune to intellectual fashions, able to resist the chance winds of doctrine, content to bear witness to its Truth. It should be an organization that is not afraid to condemn and rebuke popular enthusiasms while appealing to an older and deeper wisdom. Churchmen, however, are children of their age, and like to have their fellow intellectuals think well of them. Always in the past some churchmen have sought and found religious sanctions for every form of misgovernment and every evil that has plagued society; they are doing it today. Every age is penitent for the sins of its forebears; its own sins may have the surface appearance of virtues.

"Jesus and Geopolitics" is the exciting title of a chapter in one of Dr. Van Kirk's books. In it we read that "the Christians countered the geopolitics of Rome with a geopolitics of their own. . . . With remarkable foresight they appropriated to their own ends the instruments of empire."[3] The intended parallel with our own times is easily grasped; Christians today, if they would emulate the ancient church, must appropriate the instruments of the UN for their own ends. Apparently, as Dr. Van Kirk reads the history of Christendom, the instruments of empire served the ends of religion. Shades of theocratic im-

[3] Walter Van Kirk, *A Christian Global Strategy*, p. 21.

perialism! The church barely survived its first marriage with empire, the second may do it in.

Community of Nations

Mr. Dulles was not always in the religious picture; he figures prominently in it now. Dr. Van Kirk began as a religionist who seeks to use the international political machinery of the UN for religious ends. Mr. Dulles, on the other hand, began as an internationalist who discovered a religious instrument that was already aimed at internationalist ends.

John Foster Dulles is the product of a Presbyterian manse, like another noted peaceworker, Woodrow Wilson. He has been part of the international political and commercial scene since the first World War, and of church political action since the late thirties. In 1937, Mr. Dulles attended a League of Nations sponsored conference in Europe, and, as an ardent internationalist, was dismayed by the nationalistic bickering of the politicians assembled there. He left this conference to attend a similar one for churchmen held at Oxford. The churchmen appeared to be free from prejudices and nationalistic bias, and Mr. Dulles was delighted. He began to observe the ecclesiastical situation closely and found that churchmen had been working for years to prepare the ground for the acceptance of some kind of international political order as a Christian imperative. This fact was enough to bring Mr. Dulles importantly into American church circles in 1941 as the first chairman of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace of the Federal Council of Churches. His efforts to draft a set of principles on which peace might be built sounded to him, he said, like an echo of the Gospels.

Mr. Dulles resigned this chairmanship in 1949 to run for public office, but he still carries weight in official church circles. A recent issue of *Time* characterizes him as "a practical missionary of Christian politics." Whether this is so or not, it is a fact that Mr. Dulles, a lifelong internationalist, happened upon the church late in life and

found in it an instrument admirably adapted to his purposes, an instrument with which he could and did work.

Just prior to Mr. Dulles' association with the Federal Council of Churches, in 1940, the first American Study Conference on the Churches and the International Situation met in Philadelphia and resolved that "the Churches, which in themselves transcend national frontiers, have a peculiar responsibility to help expand men's loyalties to include the whole number of the children of our Heavenly Father and the world government required by their common needs." Following up this lead, Mr. Dulles' Commission in 1942 held a conference at Delaware, Ohio. It resolved that "a world of irresponsible, competing and unrestrained national sovereignties, whether acting alone or in alliance or in coalition, is a world of international anarchy. It must make place for a higher and more inclusive authority. . . . We believe that military establishments should be internationally controlled and be made subject to law under the community of nations."[4]

Sound and Silence

This is the line and there has been no deviation from it. In a recent official NCC pamphlet on the UN, Dr. Van Kirk writes: "Once the Allied armies had taken the offensive against Hitler, the churches took the initiative in demanding that an international organization be created to maintain the peace. . . . They were among those who called for the establishment of the United Nations."[5] And the NCC continues to call for support of the UN, and brands those who question or oppose it for whatever reasons as unchristian and "isolationist."

Like the NCC, the World Council of Churches supports the idea of a world political order and officially supports the UN. The WCC endorsement of the UN intervention in Korea caused the withdrawal of its Chinese members, one of whom was a president of the WCC. The Evanston meeting of the WCC August 1955 favored the UN and resolved that "it is important that a dynamic

[4] Delaware Report, pp. 11, 16.
[5] Walter Van Kirk, *The Churches and the United Nations,* p. 4.

concept of the world organization be kept alive and that the UN structure be subjected to periodic review." It urged that the UN "become more comprehensive in membership." It lamented that "little or no progress has been made toward world disarmament or the creation of an international police force."[6]

There are organizations set up for the sole purpose of propagandizing for the UN, such as the American Association for the United Nations. There are related organizations, such as the Church Peace Union and the Foreign Policy Association, doing a similar job. No one can quarrel with an organization that does what it is set up to do—even though one may wish to debate the merits of its case. It is different with the NCC. The NCC, according to its own literature, "is not something apart from the churches, but those churches themselves doing together those things which can be better done unitedly than separately." There is, therefore, a question of the propriety of an organization with this announced purpose becoming such a willing sounding board for UN propaganda. In allowing itself to be so used the NCC has lost its effectiveness as an independent voice on moral issues.

During the past two decades there have been critically important moral issues in the international relations field. But on many of them, those of first magnitude, the churchmen in or close to the interdenominational hierarchy have neither raised their voices as individuals nor brought the issues within official purview. Here are some of the issues in which moral values were at stake and on which churchmen, with notable individual exceptions, were silent. First of all, those with no axe to grind, whose first devotion was to truth, would have striven during the late 1930's to keep open the debate as to whether or not the United States should participate in World War II. As will be recalled, what began as a debate degenerated into name calling as soon as the intellectuals were enlisted on the interventionist side. The pulpits of the land provided few nonpartisan voices calling the disputants to sanity and

[6] From Section IV of the official Evanston Report.

principle. In the second place, there was room for an evaluation in terms of ethics of the way in which the war was being fought. But a typical ecclesiastical reaction was the declaration of the Archbishop of Canterbury, just after a European city had been bombed out, that it would be a mistake to use too little force. Gerald Heard, commenting on this incident, remarked that the State begins to wonder if it is worth fifty thousand a year to keep a man to tell it that! Third, there was the atomic bombing of a people who had been trying for months to surrender, an act whose moral significance was largely ignored at the time.

In the postwar period, it would appear that the very minimum dictated by Christian principles would be an effort to encourage a full and free discussion of such matters as the expulsion of some eighteen million people from east Germany and Poland; the Stalin-White-Morgenthau Plan for the decimation of Germany; the war crimes trials in Europe and Japan; the attempt of revisionist historians to reopen the official accounts of the genesis of World War II. This did not happen. Instead, an impartial survey of the period must conclude that the preachers presented arms again, as did their predecessors in World War I, but more subtly this time and therefore more successfully from the viewpoint of the State.

The period was not without its great moral voices, however; there were a few lonely clergymen, some military men, some lawyers, a few publicists, and a number of plain ordinary folk. But no sound came from the great ecclesiastical sounding boards or the individuals on them. The religious arm of either the State Department or the United Nations cannot at the same time function as a true church.

Chapter V

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND SOCIAL ACTION

EVANSTON will no doubt go on being the suburb of Chicago, but it is now also a landmark in Christendom after playing host during August 1954 to the World Council of Churches. It takes its place with Edinburgh, Oxford, Stockholm, Lausanne, Madras, Lucknow and Amsterdam as stepping stones of the ecumenical movement—the term which describes the efforts of churchmen to find ways in which the churches can work together.

The Second Assembly of the World Council (the world organization was launched at Amsterdam in 1948) brought together about sixteen hundred delegates, accredited visitors and consultants from forty-eight countries. There were also seven hundred press, radio and television representatives. A staff of three hundred and fifty handled the promotion and publicity, the translating, the mimeographing and the thousands of details that go with an operation of this size.

What was said at Evanston was heard 'round the world. With the help of one hundred and fifty telephones and sixteen teletype machines installed especially for the occasion, the men and women of the press filed an average of one hundred thousand words of copy a day. The activities of the Assembly were captured on thousands of feet of documentary film and on hundreds of rolls of magnetic tape. But if words could save the world, it would never have been lost!

No one could complain about not being kept busy. In addition to the plenary sessions, there was a well-planned program for the delegates and another for accredited visitors. There were meetings of the six sections to hammer out reports in each of the areas into which

Evanston had broken down its over-all theme: "Christ—The Hope of the World." There were two press sessions a day, and a morning and evening service of worship. After the official close each night, informal discussion and debate went on until the coffee houses turned out their lights at various after-midnight hours. Evanston is a dry town, and some of the European churchmen were heard to complain that the human being is just not constructed so that he can keep up this sort of a pace on coffee!

Evanston was a big and expensive operation. It had been long in preparation by a large and able staff which held sessions all over the world. Everything that size, money, organization, structure, planning, equipment, promotion and enthusiasm can accomplish was done. These things are each in the realm of means, not ends. They are good means only to the extent that they achieve the ends sought. This was recognized explicitly in a speech by the General Secretary of the World Council, W. A. Visser't Hooft. The Council, he said, "is essentially an instrument at the service of the churches to assist them in their common task to manifest the true nature of the Church. It is an instrument and must therefore never be considered as an aim in itself." In short, it was good to get together, but what will come of it?

Among the results, most of which are incalculable at this time, Evanston produced six papers and a Message—about fifteen thousand words in all. For the past four years six study commissions from three continents—about thirty theologians and laymen apiece—have been at work seeking to shed some light on the problems confronting the contemporary church in six areas. These areas are: 1) Faith and Order—"Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches," 2) Evangelism—"The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life," 3) Social Questions—"The Responsible Society in a World Perspective," 4) International Affairs—"Christians in a Struggle for World Community," 5) Intergroup Relations—"The Church Amid Racial and Ethnic Tensions," 6) The Laity—"The Christian in His Vocation." A seventh commission

prepared a long statement on the Evanston theme, "Christ —The Hope of the World."

The "Responsible Society"

Social questions have occupied just as prominent a place in the ecumenical movement as in the interdenominational trends which have produced the National Council of Churches. In each case, theological differences are soft pedalled while social questions are played fortissimo. One of the early mottoes of the ecumenical movement was "Doctrine divides but service unites." The kind of service the modern world wants is social service, and it wants social service through the good offices of the service state. An official of the World Council, writing the preface to an official compilation of conference reports on social and political matters, says: "One of the major forces which has drawn and held the Churches together in the ecumenical movement has been the necessity of their uniting in thought and action on the vast political, economic, and social problems of the world. A very large part of the energy of the movement has in turn been directed towards seeking together as Christians ways of meeting the challenge of human social disorder."[1]

Human social disorder was no less challenging at Evanston than it had been at Amsterdam, but the official statements are now much more cautious than they were in 1948. Amsterdam is remembered as the author of the official report which declared that "the Christian churches should reject the ideologies of both communism and laissez faire capitalism." At a press conference, John C. Bennett, who chaired the commission which produced this statement, said that the middle way between capitalism and communism which the report had in mind was something like the regime being worked out at that time by the Labor Party in Great Britain. A close reading of the Evanston reports reveals that there has been little if any retreat from this position. They say about what was

[1] *Ecumenical Documents on Church and Society,* edited and prefaced by John W. Turnbull.

said at Amsterdam, but six years' experience of public relations has developed a technique of saying things in such a way as to please nearly everybody.

The ecumenical movement has sired the phrase "The Responsible Society" to describe its goal in social relations. The Responsible Society concept is similar in all respects to what is concealed beneath other currently fashionable labels such as the welfare state, the middle way, a mixed economy, and the like.

The Responsible Society, as conceived at Evanston, has room for a sector of private enterprise, the price system and the businessman, along with a large sector reserved for the state with its many industrial, regulative, and welfare functions. One of the preliminary reports in this section contained this sentence: "Many socialists in Western Europe now realize the importance of the private sector of the economy and the necessity for the energetic, enterprising and expert businessman, as well as being aware of the need for state action to be decentralized, dispersed, and adaptable."

The significance of events since Amsterdam has not been lost on theologians. The ecumenical social thinkers have tried to keep pace with developments in secular thought, and so they have abandoned theoretical socialism because experiments in countries which have tried socialism have been so universally unsatisfactory. It would have been somewhat more in keeping with the position granted churchmen had they been a little more immune to passing fads and realized, as some thinkers realized years ago, that socialism would be unworkable because it is unthinkable, i.e., theoretically self-contradictory.

A University of Chicago theologian in a pre-Evanston statement declared that "Christian social and political action is in full retreat before the rising tide of reaction in face of the threat of communism." The charge implicit here appears to be that the Evanston report on the Responsible Society will let its teeth be drawn for fear of offending someone. As has been said, the new report uses less emotionally-charged words than came out of Amster-

dam, but if there is a retreat from the earlier position it is not to be found in the final report, the preliminary papers, or in the contemporary writings of the commission members. It may well be charged that the thought of these men is confused, but it must be admitted that they have the courage of their confusions. They do not appear to be the kind of men who are easily intimidated, but their present report says things in a less antagonistic manner than the earlier one.

In addition to the sobering effects of the events of the immediate past, two other factors have contributed to soften the earlier stridency of the social actionists. The first of these is the Evanston theme itself, centering as it does around the Second Coming of Christ; the other is the participation of theologians from behind the Iron Curtain in the ecumenical movement.

"Muscular Christianity"

The social action or socialistic emphasis in religion took its rise in a period of "muscular Christianity," when theologians promised to usher in the Kingdom of Heavon on earth merely by eliminating poverty and giving everybody an education. Both are desirable aims, but even if attained the result would fall somewhat short of the goal of a religion which aimed at creating, not merely nice people, but new people. A churchman who still maintains the "this-worldly" hope which prevailed a generation ago, wrote recently, "For me the welfare state par excellence is the Kingdom of Heaven." Once this would have been considered a typical expression of the Christian hope, but no longer. The catastrophe of World War I pulled the rug from under part of this prevailing optimism, but some churchmen tried to carry on in the old vein by stuffing themselves full of moonshine about the alleged virtues of communism and socialism. One would have to conclude, after reading some of the rhapsodical accounts that were published during the 1930's, and also when Russia was our war ally, that some churchmen believed in the communist cell as the true modern counterpart of the early Christian church and that Joe Stalin

was a Fifth Amendment Christian, i.e., one who wouldn't admit it lest he lose his job![2] But now there is understandable disillusionment, and with it a revival of ideas about the end of the world and the imminent reappearance of the Lord.

The World To Come

The opening keynote speech at Evanston was delivered by Professor Edmund Schlink of the theological faculty at Heidelberg University. He told his audience, "Wherever . . . people speak of the coming Christ as the *hope* of the world, they are always speaking of the *end* of the world. . . . For those who hope in Christ . . . the tumult of this world is a sure sign of Christ's coming. . . . The name of Christ is taken in vain if it is used as a slogan in this world's struggle for its own preservation." This point of view was not shared even by every theologian present, let alone the laymen, but it represents a growing emphasis in contemporary religious thought, especially in Europe, for understandable reasons. One result of this emphasis is a relaxation of interest in social uplift; it is impossible to generate much enthusiasm for a Five Year Plan among a people who believe that Christ will reappear in four!

Several churchmen from behind the Iron Curtain were at Evanston. One of these, Bishop Janos Peter of Hungary, was a member of the group which drew up the paper on the Responsible Society. In one of his appearances, Bishop Peter declared that the Church "is not bound up with any social system, but serves the Lord independently of the changes in the social system." The large element of truth behind these remarks has been well put by Christopher Dawson: "Political religion is an offence alike to religion and to politics: it takes from Caesar what belongs to him of right and fills the temple with the noise and dust of the marketplace. The only real and specifically Christian politics are the politics of the world to come, and they transform social life not by competing with sec-

[2] The literature is extensive, but consult *Towards the Christian Revolution*, edited by Scott and Vlastos; and *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, edited by Lewis, Polyani and Kitchin.

ular politics on their own ground but by altering the focus of human thought and opening the closed house of secular culture to the free light and air of a larger and more real world."[3] But coming from the bishop of a captive church, the position has some of the earmarks of an attempt to make a virtue out of necessity. The church in Hungary has to ride out a storm; it lives on sufferance under a regime which would not take kindly to efforts to throw the church's weight around in the political arena after the manner of American social actionists. In these circumstances, the church is fighting for its own survival. It tends to pull within its shell and become doctrinally tight and creedally exacting, laying emphasis on ritual and other worldliness. However efficacious these measures may be in the fight for survival, they can hardly be taken as guides for the church in more normal circumstances. But the facts are as they are, and the situation of the Iron Curtain churches being what it is, it would not have been seemly for a declaration to come out of Evanston urging the member churches of the World Council to shape themselves into political power blocs. Thus the success of the communists in several countries has, in a left-handed sort of way, clamped a lid on our local political actionists.

Idol Making

The term coined at Amsterdam, "The Responsible Society," has become the trademark of ecclesiastical social thought. The concept boils down to this: society should be so organized that its political agency, the state, will guarantee that no one falls below a minimum standard of housing, wages, education, medical care, and the like. The Evanston report amounts to an endorsement of the welfare state, but the endorsement is hedged by a warning that "we never make an idol of any social cause, institution, or system. . . . Christians are called upon to live responsibly . . . in any society, even within the most unfavorable social structure."

[3] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State*, p. 122, 3.

It is impossible to know precisely what making an idol out of any social cause means to those who drafted the report, because there has been a lot of idol making in the social actionist camp. As evidence one might cite the once-popular old slogan: "Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice." It is well that those in the Christian Socialist tradition should do some idol smashing, but it will take them a while to get over the habit of worshiping the broken pieces. In the name of their religion they still press for social remedies which cannot be put into operation unless political power is obtained to force the remedies on all those who hold other convictions about what is good for society. Also, they act as if to raise questions about the Responsible Society is to commit lese majesté.

Enemies of Freedom

A good example of this is to be found in the preliminary study. The co-chairman of the commission, John C. Bennett, declared: "Now there has developed in our Protestant churches a very extreme type of individualism which wants to go back to an absolutely unreconstructed capitalism." This irresponsible statement lacks both charity and understanding, but it is not untypical of the mind-set which is so sure of its inside track to the Deity that it cannot help but regard opposition as of the devil.

The state plays a large role in the Responsible Society: "While the state is sometimes the enemy of freedom, under many circumstances the state is the only instrument which can make freedom possible for large sectors of the population. . . . When necessary in the public interest, the state must intervene to prevent any center of economic or social power which represents partial interest from becoming stronger than itself, for the state alone has the power and the authority under God to act as trustee for society as a whole." When the private sector of the economy acts out of selfish interest and the state acts altruistically for society as a whole, it is not difficult to see which is to be given first place!

How do we know where to draw the boundary line beyond which the state is transgressing and is thus an enemy of freedom? If the state can go too far we are entitled to ask the logical question: "How far is far enough?" Is there anything in Christianity which provides us with criteria to help us determine the place and functions of the state in society? The report offers no guidance on this point, although the determination of such norms is the real issue. Without some such criteria we cannot calculate in advance as to any given policy, whether its long-run effect will likely be inimical to freedom or otherwise. Which means that by the time it becomes evident that the state is an enemy of freedom it is too late to do much about it. But the report, beyond saying that "no form of government has a universal claim on Christians"—which is obvious—offers nothing in the way of principles which might help one assess the relative merits of alternative courses of political action. We have to decide which one is the better and all we are told is that neither is perfect!

"Love Thy Neighbor"

The church has lived under many forms of government and outlived most of them. It lives today under several conflicting varieties. In the past, as many churchmen found Christian sanctions for all forms of misgovernment as are now embracing the welfare state on religious grounds. On this point the late Dean Inge spoke the mind of all those who dislike to see religion so misused: "I do not like to see the clergy, who were monarchists under a strong monarchy, and oligarchs under the oligarchy, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to become court chaplains to King Demos. The black coated advocates of spoliation are not a nice lot."[4] The church should not seek a preferential position in the state, nor should it let itself be used as the state's religious arm. But one cannot logically infer from this truism that some forms of government are not more out of harmony with Christian principles than others. And it is plausible to assume that

[4] Dean Inge, *Vale*, p. 88.

there is a form of government which is theoretically more in harmony with Christian principles than other forms of government.

If one regards government as an instrument or means of effecting certain kinds of relationships among men, then these relationships must be judged by the standard which Christianity says should guide men in all their dealings with one another. This standard is the love commandment, which derives from the Gospel injunction to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Here is a criterion to play the role of Everest to our moral striving. Even though every kind of human relationship exhibits shortcomings when measured by this standard, Christians still recognize it as being universally binding on them. Therefore, it is a norm which also applies to these human relationships which result from political action.

The All-Powerful State

Political action is indubitably coercive. A law is not merely a suggestion, it adds enforcement and penalty provisions to a general rule. Whether a government acts rightly or wrongly, whether it has the support of a majority or only a minority, its every action is backed—in the final analysis—by the use or threat of force. Once this central fact about political action is recognized we are in a position to assess the claims of those who propose to reform or organize society by means of political action. An extension and acceleration of the functions of government is an essential part of what the ecumenical thinkers refer to as the Responsible Society; just as more government is the sine qua non of most of the currently popular schemes of uplift whatever the label—Communism, Socialism, the Welfare State, the planned economy or whatnot. Every one of these involves the deliberate use or threat of legal penalties to put men through the daily paces of their economic and social affairs. The energies of the vast majority of men are put at the disposal of the few men who operate the machinery of government and use it to gear the nation to an over-all plan of production.

A portion of every man's life is planned for him, which means that he has lost that much freedom to plan his own life. An election may replace the men at the helm of government, but this does not affect the lot of the vast majority who have their lives run for them in a planned society no matter who controls the apparatus of government.

It is sometimes suggested that perhaps a politically-controlled society may not be so bad if control merely directs economic affairs and stops there. To this William Roepke remarks: "It is hardly forgivable naivete to believe that a state can be all-powerful in the economic sphere without also being autocratic in the political and intellectual domain." And Frederick Hayek supplies the reason why this is so. "Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest;" he points out, "it is the control of the means for all our ends."[5]

To put it bluntly, every scheme which envisages all or part of society directed and controlled by government must rely on legal coercion to make some men the creatures of the other men who tell them what to do and what not to do. Every society, no matter how noble its ideals and principles, will exhibit instances of power-hungry people trying to manage the lives of others without first obtaining consent. This kind of conduct is usually considered reprehensible and it is contrary to the principles of a free society; in many instances it may be against the law also. But in a collectivist society it is according to both law and principle that a few men should manage the lives of all the others! This may not be the result intended by those who advocate collectivism (the blanket term for socialism, the welfare state, the New Deal, the Responsible Society, and the like) on religious or other grounds, but their advocacy of increased political controls has at least these consequences.

Equal Justice For All

Opposed to all varieties of collectivism is a philosophy of

[5] Frederick Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, p. 92.

social organization which limits government to the restraint of those who injure their fellows, and leaves all peaceful persons completely outside the range of political interventions free to govern themselves. The customary label for this philosophy is libertarianism; it is an heir of classic liberalism.

The question is, then, which of these two alternative theories of social relationships meaures up more nearly to the Christian norm for the relations between men? If the neighbor love idea is acepted as this norm, it is difficult to see how a political arrangement designed to make men less free because it puts some men in charge of others can be squared with the Christian idea of man. It does not square with the brotherhood emphasized in other Evanston reports. True enough, the limited government idea falls short of being utopian, but among the kind of creatures human beings are it does give as much weight to the love commandment in the political arena as politics can bear. It is a government of equal justice for all, the only kind of equality possible in human affairs.

It is not according to the intellectual fashions of the day for theologians or other intellectuals to be caught saying a good word for libertarianism or the limited government concept; they declare for collectivism. But take the label off the concept and the theologian is forced by his basic principles to endorse the ultimate aim of a libertarian society while at the same time the force of fashion drives him to recommend collective organization of the nation's economic life as a means to this end. Two examples of this will suffice. The first is from the writings of America's best known theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. Dr. Niebuhr speaks of "love as the final norm of justice; for equal justice," he goes on to say, "is the approximation of brotherhood under the conditions of sin. A higher justice always means a more equal justice. Special privilege may be frowned upon more severely by those who want it than those who have it; but those who have it are uneasy in their conscience about it."[6] The second quotation

[6] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. II, Pp. 254-5.

is from a book by Paul Ramsey which has the enthusiastic endorsement of Dr. Niebuhr, John C. Bennett, and many other social actionist theologians. The book favors collectivism under that label but, as in the case of Dr. Niebuhr, it cannot avoid endorsing the libertarian objective of a government of equal justice for all. The love ethic of the Gospels, as Dr. Ramsey interprets it, means " 'regarding the good of any other individual as more than your own,' when he and you alone are involved." But when the relationship extends beyond two isolated individuals, love gives way to justice. "Love is always the primary notion," Dr. Ramsey declares, "since justice may be defined as what Christian love does when confronted by two or more neighbors."[7] Accepting these statements at their face value one is led in the direction of a social theory which does its utmost to keep political power limited in scope and dispersed so that it is not readily available to those who desire to override the wills of other men. Under this, as under any other social theory, there will be collisions of interest and attempts by some to manage others, but the limited government concept is designed to discourage these evils. Under every other scheme, however, these deviations from principle become the norm for the legal pattern to which society is forced to conform.

"Anti-Communist Hysteria"

It is natural that the rise of communism should receive a share of the attention in a report devoted to the principles of social reform. Communism is regarded as a threat to the Responsible Society, but the growth of communism is viewed by Evanston as "a judgment upon our modern societies generally for past or present indifferences to social justice, in which the Church is also involved." The report might have pointed out that communism, which embodies virtually every kind of injustice men have endured plus a few new ones of its own, cannot be viewed simply as a judgment on our past indifference. It is something more than this, but the social thought of the ecu-

[7] Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics*, p. 243.

menicists is too close to the basic premises of communism —the regimentation of men by force—to attain a true perspective on it. One of the dangers of the present situation, the report continues, is "the temptation to succumb to the anti-communist hysteria and the danger of a self-righteous assurance concerning the political and social systems of the West." The report contains no warning about the dangers of hysterical anti-anti-communism.

Grass Roots and Window Boxes

One might sum up the matter by saying of this report, and of the other five: It is all familiar stuff. The active work of the ecumenical movement has been in the hands of men who live on that level of society where the intellectual fads and fancies flow fastest, and these people talk among themselves in terms that gently massage each other's minds. The ecumenical movement has not got down to the grass roots, perhaps because so many of the ecumenical set know of grass roots only from their office window boxes. In one of the Evanston addresses, Dr. Samuel M. Cavert, associate secretary for the United States of the World Council of Churches, said, "We must frankly admit that the average church member does not see far beyond his denominational boundary or even his parish. . . . This is the most disturbing weakness in the ecumenical movement." By the same token, the average church member's policy of inaction may be a token of his strength. Regarding this as more a war of position than a war of maneuver, he stays put. If this hinders him from heading out fast in the right direction, he is, at any rate, better off than those traveling in the wrong direction. And when you come right down to it there are enough challenges in the local parish to keep the average layman or minister busy for a while. After all, there have been quite a few repercussions from a local disturbance that took place in a Nazareth parish some time ago!

Chapter VI

SOCIAL ACTION GUIDANCE FOR ECONOMIC LIFE

THE World Council of Churches meeting at Evanston did not condemn capitalism in the same breath as communism, as it had done at the Amsterdam meeting several years earlier. Many persons heaved a sigh of relief. Editorial writers guessed that churchmen had harvested their wild oats and were now back on the reservation.

This optimistic opinion appeared to be confirmed a few weeks later when the National Council of Churches issued its four-thousand-word statement entitled: "Christian Principles and Assumptions for Economic Life," on September 15, 1954. The New York *Times* headline read: "Church Council Sets Social Code—Adopts Christian Precepts Opposing Collectivism and Backing Free Enterprise."

Our last chapter pointed out that a closer inspection of the Evanston report revealed no retreat from Amsterdam; this chapter will examine the National Council statement to determine the extent to which it backs free enterprise.

The Familiar "Middle of the Road"

The Council statement is moderate compared with earlier pronouncements emanating from ecclesiastical quarters which declared for out-and-out socialism. It recognizes that "uncritical recourse to the state to remedy every evil creates its own evils," and adds that "in some situations Christians have had the misconception that the one sure road to economic justice is the socialization of all the major means of production." These equivocal statements,

sprinkled with qualifying adjectives, may indicate some disillusionment among churchmen with their former faith in consistent collectivism, but it certainly does not erect any barrier of principle against further experiments in socialization.

The statement reveals an exceedingly limited opposition to collectivism, and the extent to which it backs free enterprise is even more limited. It calls for a more general "private ownership of many forms of property" and justifies "some inequalities of wealth and income" because inequalities stimulate productivity. Furthermore, the pronouncement says, attempts to level society impair freedom. The closest the authors of the statement come to indicating the nature of their social goal is this sentence: "In some countries, as in our own, the possibilities of a combination of individual freedom and social responsibility have been encouragingly indicated and continue to be explored, along with the relationship between government and private or semiprivate economic groups." This brings us back onto the familiar and already crowded ground in the middle of the road face to face with the welfare state or mixed-economy idea. The middle of the road may feel comfortable until it dawns on us that what we really need to know is not so much the location of the sides of the road as where the road is going. After reading his statement we fear the road is headed in the direction of more socialization rather than less. The statement is full of strictures and censures directed against economic institutions and activities, which are meaningless unless the intention is to implement them by laws—all of which adds up to increased government intervention in the economy.

The New Debate

These strictures and censures against business comprise part of the prophetic role which churches must play in society, according to the statement. Another responsibility of churches in society is that of "conservation and promotion in that society of such values as justice and freedom." It is obvious that the conservative and pro-

phetic roles are complementary; one holds fast to that which is good while trying to test all human relationships and situations in "the light of the teachings of the gospel."

The prophetic role has never been an easy one, but it is especially difficult today, the statement contends, because "any admission of fault or failure in our society may be falsely construed as giving aid and comfort to enemies, even as disloyal or subversive." This is to echo the complaint that the certified, advanced, heavyweight Thinkers have been making for the past several years. Criticism of our domestic shortcomings is drying up, say these Thinkers, and our Best Minds are full of great thoughts which they dare not utter. This is such unmitigated nonsense that one cannot adequately describe it without venturing into the categories of pathology! The truth of the matter is that with the rise of a philosophy opposed to all brands of collectivism social criticism is now really coming of age.

The complaining critics, the certified Thinkers, are now for the first time facing a real debate. Their omniscience is being challenged. There is now the beginning of a genuine discussion, replacing what has for so long been a monologue. To put the matter in more concrete terms, the collectivists (whether they call themselves socialists, New Dealers, welfare staters, or something else) have pretty much had the field to themselves for many years. The only resistance they have had has come from popular inertia or selfish interests. It is only during the past decade with the growth and development of libertarian thought that the socializers have met real resistance on moral and intellectual grounds. They have not been able to meet this challenge adequately in open encounter, and they are unable to face up to their new position. They retain the psychology of a tiny advanced minority, when actually they do little more than voice the vague notions of the majority about the competence of government to manage economic life and care for every citizen.

The authors of this National Council Statement do not intend to discuss the technical points of economics or

political theory; their purpose is to declare God's lordship over the whole of life, including men's economic and political activities. It would be difficult for any Christian to find fault with this aim, for in the affirmation that God is, there is contained the inference that no part of life can be properly lived apart from Him. There is a temptation for man to try to do this, to put his ego at the center where it does not belong. Man as a sinner is a rebel against God and the things in God's world; the ego wants things to accommodate themselves to it. The effort of the ego to exploit the universe for itself is magic. The individual grows in maturity as he learns that there are things in this world which he cannot coerce, cajole or change. His effort to accommodate himself to realities, and grow up to his conception of what is most Real, is religion. What is popularly regarded as religion is, on this analysis, often closer to magic.

This understanding of the human situation has been part of every serious philosophy of life, and as the concept of sin, it is vital to Christianity. It has a direct bearing on any effort to understand God's lordship in its bearing upon economic life.

Production and Distribution

Economics is a young science, barely two hundred years old. It originated with "the discovery of a regularity in the sequence and interdependence of market phenomena." Now if there are regularities, sequences and interdependences[1] in this area, then man will have to make his accommodation to them and he will rebel against the need to do so. Economic facts may be hard to take, and we would expect a resolute refusal to accept them. Nevertheless, there they are and a denial of them carries its own consequences.

In view of the current theological emphasis on pride, human pretensions, and sin, one has a right to expect that theologians who deal in social problems would make a resolute effort to understand the subject matter with

[1] Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action,* p. 2.

which economics purports to deal. But nearly every social thinker who comes within the religious orbit tries to deny economics. They are willing to admit that goods are produced in conformity with the laws of physics and chemistry, but they are unwilling to admit that distribution is governed by any laws save those passed by some legislature. They find it difficult to speak of the laws of economics without putting the word "laws" in quotation marks, or qualifying it by the words, "so called."

Much of the confused thinking at this point stems from John Stuart Mill. Mill launched the idea that while the production of goods is within the domain of economics, their distribution is outside that domain and within the scope of legislation and politics. To quote Mr. Mill's own words (from Book II of his *Principles of Political Economy*):

> "The laws and conditions of the production of wealth, partake of the character of physical truths. There is nothing optional or arbitrary in them. . . . But it is not so with the distribution of wealth. That is a matter of human institution solely; [it] depends on the laws and customs of society. The rules by which it is determined are what the opinions and feelings of the ruling portion of the community make them."

In the production of goods we have no choice, we obey the laws of physics and chemistry. But when it comes to distribution we can do exactly as we please, unhampered by moral scruples or customs, and having at our command the magic power of legislation. After goods are produced, "the ruling portion of the community" steps in and, by the use or threat of force, distributes wealth according to the dictates of political expediency. There is here the germ of the whole scanty philosophy of the Welfare State. The position thus outlined is at least a possible philosophy, and can be discussed and debated. But when the apologist for the Welfare State philosophy tries to fit it into a Christian context he unwittingly takes on the impossible task of finding a theological sanction for abandoning morality in favor of legality.

From this idea of Mill stems a major portion of the philosophy of the non-Marxist left. The basic premise of this group is that while there is a universe of natural law "out there," immune to human interference, there is no moral order of comparable independence and integrity. The laws "out there" go on operating whether we will or no, and we have to obey these laws when we produce goods. What we label the moral order, however, is in our heads. It has the same status as legislation and custom—which are obviously of human contrivance.

Kenneth Boulding, an economist who is close to the National Council, writes: "To an astonishing extent, the exponents of the 'social gospel' seem to believe that the actual economic system is, in fact, stationary."[2] In other words, they think in terms of cutting the same size pie so that some who now get more will get less, and vice versa. They do not think in terms of increasing the size of the pie so that all will get more. If it is the mark of pretension and pride to deny reality and autonomy to any part of God's world, then the denial of economics by ecclesiastical social thinkers indicates how close to home theology needs to start. It needs to abandon its assumption that there is nothing wrong with economics that politics cannot cure!

Power Met With Power

In the production of goods and services man expends his energies in certain ways and not in others—in keeping with his own judgment. Controls clamped upon economic life by the political agency mean that some men with power have redirected the way in which other men will expend their energy. The open avowal of a philosophy which puts some men at the disposal of other men is inconsistent with the Christian view of life. So somewhere along the line the men who want to control have to pick up an excuse which justifies them and reveals their intended victims as men who ought to be controlled. Men who would resist political control of the press, political control of the schools, political control of the churches,

[2] In *Goals of Economic Life,* Dudley Ward, Editor, p. 75.

nevertheless advocate political control of men in their economic affairs. The alleged justification for this seeming inconsistency is the belief that men are coerced in economic arrangements as they indubitably are coerced in political arrangements. The application of political coercion, it is held, balances off the economic coercion, and power is met with power. If the advice to meet power with power is somewhat dubious in Christian ethics, it is fallacious in economics. It rests on what nineteenth century economic thought called the Wage Fund theory whose fallacies have been demonstrated time and again. Until there is some consensus as to the basic facts of economics, the efforts to lay down Christian principles and assumptions for economic life are doomed to frustration.

"The Church Must Speak"

If the National Council statement as a set of ideas is open to serious question which seems to vitiate much of it, the propriety of a few people issuing such a pronouncement in the name of thirty-five million constituents is open to even more serious objection. Apart from inviting the criticism that a few men dedicated to social change are using the church and the constituency to increase the sound and carrying power of their words, the reiteration of the phrase, "The Church must speak" reveals a curious notion of how society should be organized.

If it be maintained that "The Church must speak," will one go on and urge that "The Universities must speak," "The Press must speak," "The Legal Profession must speak," "The Medical Profession must speak," and so on? The idea of breaking up national life along the lines of professional and occupational interests as an old and discredited political idea. Alexander Hamilton discussed it in his 35th Federalist Paper and dismissed it. This is the corporate state idea, and it has been tried in the modern world with notoriously poor results.

A further objection to a statement of this kind is that the drafting of it—if past experience be a guide—was the work of a very few men, although it is said that more than

a hundred participated in the discussions which led to the adoption of the statement. This means that people in the inner sanctum of the Division of Christian Life and Work of the National Council pretty much determine the policy and the platform for the National Council, and, by the magic of promotion, for the thirty-five million. Without denying the professional and the expert his place, it is legitimate to ask whether his place is to determine policy.

Chapter VII

PRESBYTERIANS AND THEIR LETTER

EVERY major denomination has a social action agency staffed by men who wish to see the economy at least partly socialized. Many of these men have been open members of the Socialist Party; nearly every one would go right down the line for the welfare state. This is said for purposes of identification, not criticism. Most denominations keep their social action agency under the general budget; denominational officials with a strong socialistic bent are working full time to bring their own membership into the light, but at the same time they are using this membership for the reinforcement of their socialistic ideas. This makes little sense unless the denomination wants to exert political influence, because the soundness of an idea has nothing to do with the number of people who are alleged to believe in it—except in the calculations of the politician.

The Presbyterians were pioneers in establishing a social action agency. C. H. Hopkins writes: "The Department of Church and Labor of the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was the first official church agency to pursue an aggressive social-gospel campaign through the efforts of a paid secretary. It was not only a remarkable phenomenon in an otherwise conservative denomination, but it acted as a powerful stimulus to the awakening social conscience of other religious bodies."[1] This was in 1903. There were many things wrong with our society in 1903 —as there still are—and one has to admire those who made a courageous effort to grapple with social problems even though he is in complete disagreement with the socialistic

[1] C. H. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-281.

diagnosis and remedy. The socialist of fifty years ago often had to take a lonely stand, and he was willing to suffer, need be, for his pathetic faith. The social actionist of today, however, believes just about what everyone else believes. He voices today's consensus but he tries to convey the impression that he is carrying on in the pioneering tradition of the earlier reformers. And so, unwittingly, he peddles the wares of other intellectual double-domes[2] after putting in a dash of piety here and there. Churchmen have an utterly different role than this to play if the church is to be truly the church.

As a case study of the church caught far off its own base, let us examine the highly publicized letter to Presbyterians, popularly known as The MacKay Letter from its principal drafter, President John A. MacKay of Princeton Theological Seminary. This letter was released to all news services in the fall of 1953, and was greeted with loud acclaim and equally loud protest. There was opposition to the Letter in local presbyteries in various parts of the country, but when the commissioners of the church gathered for the 166th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. in June of 1954 the letter was endorsed by a vote of 880 to 1. Such opposition as had organized

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[2] C. S. Lewis makes a pertinent observation about those who are called intellectuals, eggheads, or double-domes.

"We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spiritual element.' The head rules the belly through the chest—the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest—Magnanimity—Sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal. The operation of *The Green Book* and its kind (a typical egghead book which Lewis has been dissecting) is to produce what may be called Men without Chests. It is an outrage that they should be commonly spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say that he who attacks them attacks Intelligence. It is not so. They are not distinguished from other men by any unusual skill in finding truth nor any virginal ardour to pursue her. Indeed it would be strange if they were: a persevering devotion to truth, a nice sense of intellectual honour, cannot be long maintained without the aid of a sentiment which Gaius and Titius (Lewis does not wish to disclose the real names of the authors he is criticizing) could debunk as easily as any other. It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so."—*The Abolition of Man,* pp. 15-16.

was apparently screened out in the process of choosing delegates.

The "Sharing of Thoughts" Becomes a Crusade

This Letter was a message sent to the member churches—and the news services—by the Presbyterian General Council, the governing body of that Church. The General Council is instructed by the constitution of the Church "to correspond with and advise the General Councils of Presbyteries. . . ." i.e., the 257 local bodies which comprise the governing structure of this church. In its message, the General Council was "guided by the historic witness of our Church and the deliverances of successive General Assemblies." It introduced the Letter by quoting with approval a pronouncement of the 165th General Assembly on Christians' "responsibility as citizens of their nation, to seek as far as their influence may extend, to bring national life and all the institutions of society into conformity with the moral government of God, and into harmony with the spirit of Jesus Christ." And then it continued, "In full accordance with this deliverance, the General Council would share with our Church constituency the following thoughts:"

It would be difficult for Christians to disagree with this opening statement, and one can also endorse the approach which conceives the Letter as a sharing of thoughts. This mild and humble beginning may indicate that the General Council initially ventured to set forth its fairly commonplace thoughts for the churches to mull over, and then to accept, amend, or reject. Probably the Council was taken by surprise by the extravagant reception accorded its Letter by churchmen and nonchurchmen alike, by the warm acceptance and the heated rejection. On the one hand, a prominent theologian, John C. Bennett, hailed it as a shining example of "corporate prophetic teaching," while on the other hand, the Letter was attacked as a device to give aid and comfort to the enemy—the enemy in this case being Communism.

Buffeted in this first encounter by friend and foe alike,

the General Council came back swinging. Now the issue was larger than the content of the Letter, or its lack of content; the Faith was at stake and needed defenders. All who wanted to defend the Faith must fight to keep the Letter from falling into the hands of the infidel. The proponents of the Letter chose to accord their attackers the major portion of their energies, and they met attack with counter-attack, and ignored those who merely wanted to discuss the ideas in the Letter on their own merits. This became an exciting crusade for those engaged in doing battle, but there was a major casualty; what began as an effort to share thoughts, became a determination to lay down the law.

The Assembly vote of 880 to 1 in favor of the Letter, the whole Letter, and nothing but the Letter, is evidence of the band-wagon psychology which the whole episode has generated. Following the adoption vote some one proposed a vote of confidence in Dr. MacKay, the author, and the gathering leaped to its feet and applauded long and loud. In this kind of atmosphere there can be no detached discussion of issues, and there was none. Right had once more been vindicated, and evil men foiled.

Our Modern "Inquisitions"

The Letter to Presbyterians, like almost every pronouncement issuing of late from other self-styled progressive and forward-looking circles, starts off by giving us the lowdown on Congressional Committees. The Letter approves the committee system, and says that investigations have helped "to forestall the insidious intervention of a foreign power in the internal affairs of our country." It goes on to say, "Congressional committees, which are an important expression of democracy in action, have rendered some valuable services to the nation." But—and this is an all-important but—"Some Congressional inquiries have revealed a distinct tendency to become inquisitions."

Guess which inquiries are here referred to. If you guessed the Nye, LaFollette, Truman, or Buchanan Com-

mittees, you are wrong! These committees never, never practiced the rough tactics that present day committees are accused of, or if they did, look at the kind of people these committees investigated—people who deserved all they got and more!

Not until Congressional committees went to work on security and loyalty risks in government was there a threat to basic human rights—or such is the inference we are led to draw. The Letter reads, "Favored by an atmosphere of intense disquiet and suspicion, a subtle but potent assault upon basic human rights is now in progress." Not a few years ago, but now! This sentiment has been repeated *ad nauseum* by the "liberal" intelligentsia, who not only did not raise their voices in protest against the tactics of earlier Congressional investigations, but applauded the tactics, and in some cases helped engineer the investigations.

The Intolerant "Liberals'

We are not living in a post-war era, but in a perpetual-war era. This is the time of permanent crisis, and we have lived in this atmosphere for fifteen or more years. Fifteen years ago, many of our "liberal" intelligentsia, including the most prominent of our theologians, were finding a great new faith in their war of words against fascism abroad and what they called "isolationism" at home. When the New Deal sought war abroad as a means of recouping its lost prestige at home, the lay and clerical supporters of our local utopia followed the piper with even more enthusiasm than they had displayed for domestic reforms. In addition to their old targets, the economic royalists and the reactionaries who opposed the New Deal, they were given a whole set of new targets on whom to heap abuse—those who advocated United States neutrality, and on this account were portrayed as friendly to fascism.

Tolerance is not likely to thrive during a war against enemies pictured as satanic, and the "liberal" intelligentsia were intolerant toward any who questioned the

idealism of the crusade. This intolerance persisted after the war, and is still with us today. When ardor is dampened by seeing one proclaimed aim of the war after another go sour, there is a natural tendency to want to poke beneath the surface of events in the interests of an honest historical record. The official propaganda of the First World War was replaced by revisionist history when scholars began to sift the evidence. But the "liberal" intelligentsia have pretty well stopped the writing of revisionist history by contemporary scholars, and where a book has actually appeared in print, they have attempted to bury it and its author under an avalanche of smears. Not even world eminence in his field exempted the late Charles A. Beard from getting the treatment by "liberal" writers and book reviewers. This situation is a standing disgrace to our academic world.

And these are the "liberal" intelligentsia who are putting up a deafening clamor that they are being silenced by democratic efforts to weed our loyalty and security risks in government!

The Letter to Presbyterians falls into step with these people and takes up their hue and cry. This is indeed a witness of a sort, but it is not the kind of prophetic witness one has a right to anticipate from an institution which is expected to live closer to its conscience than to current opinion polls.

A "Positive" Approach to Communism

The Letter is seriously concerned because many people approach "the grave problem of Communism in a purely negative way. Communism, which is at bottom a secular religious faith of great vitality," the Letter says, "is thus being dealt with as an exclusively police problem." Communism was a philosophy long before it became the secular faith it now is for many people. Assorted tenets of its philosophy may be, and are widely held by people who are not devotees of the Communist faith. They may, indeed, believe themselves to be strongly anti-Communist. Thus, while guarding against conspiracy, it is important

to meet the philosophy of Communism on the philosophical level. The Letter contains a critical reference to our tendency to treat Communism as an "exclusively police problem." But a disparaging reference to the methods of the policeman does not automatically lead to an adoption of the methods of the philosopher. There is nothing in the Letter which indicates the slightest interest in opposing the *philosophy* of Communism on that level. It views with alarm our "fanatical negativism" toward Communism, which may lead to a spiritual emptiness in our national house that could "be occupied with ease by a fascist tyranny" in "the case of a national crisis." It says that "attacks are being made upon citizens of integrity and social passion"; that "truth is being subtly and silently dethroned"; that "the demagogue, who lives by propaganda, is coming into his own on a national scale," and more in the same old vein.

Nothing in the Letter even hints at the lines along which a philosophical *critique* of Communism would proceed. All it says is that Communism goes against the grain of human nature, and that it "has an approaching rendezvous with God and the moral order." That much, at least, is obvious; "for things," as Emerson observed, "won't be mismanaged long." Things may even themselves out in a thousand years! But it is no help, when we ask for a healing or curative word now, to be told: Wait, there'll be a catastrophe by and by!

The Wicked Ex-Communists

Verbally, the Letter is aware of the menace of Communism and of our need to defend ourselves against it, but at the same time it seeks to weaken one important line of defense by slandering the ex-Communist. One of the important ways of protecting ourselves against the conspiratorial activities of Communism is to find out how the apparatus works by listening critically to those who have been close to the apparatus or part of it. Many ex-Communists are eager to make amends for the damage they may have done our society during their party days,

by testifying to what they know. Yet these men, as a class, are the victims of a scurrilous attack in the Letter to Presbyterians. The imputation is that most of them are liars. The Letter purports to be shocked "that men and women should be publicly condemned upon the uncorroborated word of former Communists. . . . The ex-Communists to whose word Congressional committees apparently give unqualified credence are in very many instances people whose basic philosophy authorizes them now, as in the past, to believe that a lie in a good cause is thoroughly justified."

The Letter then performs the incredible feat of stooping even lower than this level of abuse to attack one of the great Churches of Christendom which some former Communists have joined. It says, "Many of these witnesses have done no more, as we know, then transfer their allegiance from one authoritarian system to another," and their new religious faith, the Letter informs us, authorizes them to lie in a good cause!

"In All Things, Charity"

"In all things, charity," is the concluding phrase of a fine old motto. But there is something about the collectivist faith which erodes charity. Nor is it difficult to see why this must be so. The politically organized society replaces the old natural social bonds of fellowship, mutuality, contract, cooperation, competition and the like, with an enforced relationship. This is what loss of freedom means. The collectivist either aims at this directly or else he regards this as an unfortunate by-product of his alleged goal, the welfare of a selected group. It is interesting to poke into the area of unconscious motivation, and then to realize that the collectivist way of helping some people is by hurting other people. His desire is not a simple desire to help, as is an act of charity. Thus, in the light of what we know about unconscious motivation, it is impossible for the collectivist to declare his real motives—whether they are to help the ones he says he wants to help, or to hurt the ones he can't avoid hurting in the process.

In any event, forces are set afoot which inevitably increase tensions and hatred in society, and it is noteworthy that virtually every piece of collectivist literature selects a sacrificial victim against which to direct its venom.

This may help account for a phenomenon remarked by Henry P. Van Dusen. "Religion," he observed, "is gaining ground—morality is losing ground. . . . Either there will be a moral renewal or [religious gains] will fritter out into futility."[1] There is an immoralism in the social planning of peoples' lives, and the long preoccupation of religion with ethically questionable social theories may go a long way toward explaining the phenomenon that has aroused the concern of Dr. Van Dusen and many others.

[1] *Time*, 2/15/54.

Chapter VIII

THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF LIBERTY

IN virtually every official pronouncement by a denominational or interdenominational body for the past fifty years, there is a consistent bias in favor of collectivism and a willingness to give up portions of political liberty in return for the promise of security or welfare. This bias favors the increase of political power at the expense of social power; it strengthens the hand of the state at the expense of freedom. The history of liberty, as nearly every student of the subject has pointed out, is the history of the limitation of governmental power. In every age some men have distrusted liberty and chosen to put their faith in political power. There is no theological reason why clergymen should do so; but during most of its history, the church has been yoked to the state. Most clergymen, therefore, have been pensioners of the state—which does not make it easy for them to take a detached view of political power.

Church and state began to move apart in the eighteenth century, and the sermons of New England divines of the period show a remarkable grasp of the philosophy of liberty. But even at that time, in 1773, the Reverend Charles Turner was upset by some of his brethren of the cloth and led to comment on "the immense damage done to an enslaved world by clergymen's excessive compliance to men in power."

During and preceding the American Revolution there was a considerable body of Loyalist clergy who stuck with their king, but the most thoughtful and eloquent of the clergy came down squarely on the side of liberty. Turner said, "The scriptures cannot rightly be expounded without explaining them in a manner friendly to the cause

of freedom." Daniel Shute of Hingham said, "Life, liberty, and property are the gifts of the Creator." Samuel West of Dartmouth, Massachusetts, said, "The true design of civil government is to protect men in the enjoyment of liberty." "Property, liberty, and life are all at stake together," declared Samuel Webster of Salisbury. And John Tucker of Newburyport preached that "All men are naturally in a state of freedom, and have an equal claim to liberty. No one by nature, nor by any special grant from the great Lord of all, has any authority over another." Said Daniel Shute, "Mankind have no right voluntarily to give up to others those natural privileges, essential to their happiness, with which they are invested by the Lord of all: for the improvement of *these* they are accountable to Him."[1]

There is thus a virile tradition of liberty in American church history, and if it has had to go underground, so to speak, during recent years, it has by no means been inactive. And it has had thrust upon it the opportunity to perfect and round out its philosophy while the collectivists in the public eye—as well as in the saddle riding mankind—have been busy trying to promote a fanfare around their various pronouncements and resolutions.

Spiritual Mobilization

The pioneer organization in the field of religious libertarianism—the philosophy which takes its stand on the observation of Thomas Jefferson that "The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time"—is Spiritual Mobilization, which recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

The temper of the thought in ecclesiastical circles twenty years ago can be gauged by a resolution passed at the 1934 meeting of the General Council of the Congregational Church. This resolution condemned "our present competitive profit-seeking economy" which "depends for its existence upon exploitation of one group by another." It further resolved that:

[1] From Franklin E. Cole, *They Preached Liberty.*

"We set ourselves to work toward: The abolition of the system responsible for these destructive elements in our common life, by eliminating the system's incentives and habits, the legal forms which sustain it, and the moral ideals which justify it: the inauguration of a genuinely cooperative social economy democratically planned."

The thousand-odd delegates at the meeting were told by Hubert Herring, the first head of the Congregationalist's Council for Social Action: "It is revolution. The old patterns are torn up. Rugged individualism, the sacred rights of capitalism . . . are dead. . . . The day of profit is done."

This did not sound like the proper ethical and social application of Christianity to one of the delegates, the Reverend Dr. James W. Fifield, Jr. The matter weighed on his mind for some months, and then, early in 1935 he met with a small group of men in Chicago, men who shared a common concern over the way the world was going and an equal concern over the remedies popularly proposed. Totalitarian regimes had been fastened on several great nations, and in the United States, government was placing controls and restrictions on many areas of life formerly subject only to voluntary cooperation and competition. The old landmarks by which men had fixed their course were attacked and obscured; new gods were offered in their stead, and secular religions offered to replace the genuine faiths.

The great changes which were sweeping over the world had political and economic repercussions. Interest tended to center at this level, both in the popular mind and in the newspapers. The scramble by the dictators for power and the efforts to find remedies for economic distress were newsworthy items and seemed to concern everybody. To the little group meeting in Chicago, however, it was a conviction that the troubles on the plane of economics were but symptoms of a deeper distress.

The real source of the trouble was the disorder in the religious realm; men were confused about their real na-

ture and destiny; right and wrong seemed to be all mixed up and there was difficulty telling one from the other. The human spirit was suffering frustration. This being the diagnosis, no mere recommendations for new political machinery would suffice, nor would mere economic palliatives. The solution had to be sought at the level on which the problems originated—and this was the level of religion and theology.

The initiative for founding an organization based upon the ideas coming out of this Chicago meeting was taken by Dr. Fifield, minister then, as now, of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. He had the active aid and encouragement of another member of the Chicago group, Dr. Donald J. Cowling, a distinguished educator and then president of Carleton College. The first credo of the organization is still at the masthead: "Man, being created as a child of God, has certain inalienable rights and responsibilities; the state must not be permitted to usurp them: it is the duty of the church to help protect them."

Almost singlehandedly and without salary, Dr. Fifield for years carried on the work of Spiritual Mobilization. At the same time he had the responsibility of a church (now exceeding four thousand members) besides being active in numerous civic enterprises. He travelled back and forth across the country lecturing to all kinds of audiences, conferring with clergymen and laymen, trying to alert church men to the dangers inherent in every variety of government coercion.

That Spiritual Mobilization has survived the storms of twenty controversial years, that it has continued to grow in stature and acceptance, gaining an ever firmer intellectual and moral foundation for its convictions, is testimony to the unflagging energy, devotion, and wisdom of this one man.

A review of its various publications and other activities shows that Spiritual Mobilization endeavors to get thought started on the concept of liberty. The activities of the organization are completely nondenominational

and nonsectarian. It seems committed to a long-range educational approach to social problems, conceiving its task in terms of planting the seeds of ideas, stimulating private inquiry and study, awakening a desire to explore the philosophy of freedom, and spreading the understanding that every impairment of liberty is a moral evil. It takes the position that no people has ever attained a truly liberal society—not even on this continent—and that even the concept of liberty has eluded full comprehension. Thus we have here an organized and important effort to show something of the range and depth of the problem, and to enlarge where possible on some of the partial answers men have given.

The Religious Case for Liberty

The religious case for individual liberty rests upon the conviction that each person has a tap root to the Eternal, that his principle of existence is to be found not in himself but in God. The will and conscience of the individual are peculiarly his own, but they lie along a spiritual frontier where a man comes into communion with his God. The fruit of this communion is an elevation of character and a quickened conscience, issuing in transformed action. Thus, whoever interposes by violence or threat, between another man's conscience and his conduct reduces that man to his creature and makes of him a mere appendage to an alien will. This is a violation of the natural order of things, because man is a creature of God, not of any other man or combination of men. Anyone, or any group, or any government, which supersedes a man's will by force, plays the part of God and reduces men to puppets. This is a moral evil, whether the force be exercised by one person over another, or by government in the name of a majority.

There is a social role which legal force, or government, can play in the community. It can protect the peaceful business of society by using force—if that becomes necessary—on peace-breakers.

Individuals devise means to protect and defend them-

selves against violence, or threat from others. For this they have every right in ethics. If they have a right to be alive at all, they have an equivalent right to defend their lives. Under the advantages of specialization and the division of labor, the right of each individual to defend his life, his liberty, and his rightful material possessions on which life and liberty depend, is turned over to a single man or group invested with delegated authority. In some such fashion the idea of government came into being, as distinct from that arbitrary force exercised by a tyrant, with which men everywhere have had experience. This is the uniquely American idea of government—an agency among men to secure to every individual his God-given rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

In this conception, government is a legal repository of force, the social apparatus of compulsion, and its moral ground for being is the observed fact that peaceful citizens need defense against predation from within and from outside their societies. This is the use of legal force against aggressors and criminals for the protection of peaceful citizens—a principle utterly at variance with the collectivist idea of the use of legal force against peaceful citizens either "for their own good" or for the supposed welfare of others.

The collectivist principle depends on the use of legal force and penalties to make individuals conform to the master plan imposed on them. This principle lies at the heart of communism, socialism, the welfare state, and all other varieties of the planned economy. In each of these systems, government is called on to force men to act in ways contrary to the way they would otherwise act if force and penalties were not used against them. The socialist, the collectivist, the social planner of whatever variety,, is a man who endorses some degree of legal coercion to make peaceful citizens do what he wants them to do and yet feels incompetent to persuade them to do.

Every variety of tyranny rests upon the belief that some persons have a right—or even a duty—to impose their wills upon other people. Tyranny may be fastened upon others

by the mere whim of one man, as in a dictatorship. Or tyranny may be imposed upon a minority "for their own good" by a democratically elected majority. But in any case, tyranny is always a denial—or a misunderstanding—of the mandates of an authority or law higher than man himself.

Liberty rests upon the belief that all proper authority for man's relationships with his fellowmen comes from a source higher than man—from the Creator. Liberty decrees that all men—subject and ruler alike—are bound by this higher authority which is above and beyond man-made law; that each person has a relation to his Maker with which no other person, not even the ruler, has any right to interfere. In order to make these conceptions effective for liberty, they must be deeply ingrained in the fundamental values of a people. That is to say, they must be part of the popular religion. There was one people of antiquity for whom this was true, the people who gave us our Old Testament. It was among the ancient Israelites that the conviction took hold and emerged into practice that there was a God of righteousness whose judgments applied even to rulers.

"The Lord Is Our King"

The science of archeology has unearthed some spectacular ruins in Egypt, in Babylonia, in Crete and in Greece. All over the Middle East, patient researchers have turned up monuments and vainglorious inscriptions carved into rock or pressed into clay at the behest of proud kings. Except in Palestine! There has been nothing brought to light in Palestine comparable to the monuments extolling the vain kings of Egypt. An authority states that there is not a single royal inscription from any of the Bible kings. The Prophets saw to that! No boastful king in ancient Israel would have presumed to leave an inscription dedicated to his own glory, much as he felt he deserved such. The Prophets would have quickly put such a king in his place, and popular resentment would have run high against such inflation of human pride.

In Greece and Rome there were men noted as great lawgivers: Lycurgus, Solon, Justinian and others. In other countries there were royal decrees by the thousands. A law would be promulgated with some such words as, "I, the King command. . . ." In Egypt and in Babylon, even as in Greece and Rome, authority for a law stemmed from a man, the Ruler. But in Palestine the situation was different. In Biblical literature there is not a single law emanating from kings or other secular authority which was recorded and preserved as permanently valid. Nor have archeologists in Palestine unearthed royal decrees inscribed on clay tablets or graven on rock.

Now, no people live together without conforming to a commonly accepted code, and without having recourse at times to law. The people of ancient Palestine lived under authority, not in a condition of anarchy. If the king was not the source of their law, there must have been another and higher source. There is no doubt as to what their authority was: They looked to God as the source of their law. "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king." (Is. 33:22). All, or nearly all, of the basic laws of this people were written as though emanating from God Himself. Instead of "I, the king," it was "I, the Lord." "And ye shall keep my statutes and do them: I am the Lord." (Lev. 20:8). "Thus saith the Lord: Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow." (Jer. 22:3).

This is the system of law, laid down in the Scriptures, expanded and interpreted by human reason, of which the Psalmist said, ". . . his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Ps. 1:2) Nearly every man was learned in this law, and also deeply involved in the religious relation to God in which the law was rooted—and liberty was a precious by-product of these conditions. Establish these conditions—that is, widely held religious values in which God is regarded as the source of authority and justice, superior to any earthly

power—and they provide a firm foundation for political liberty. In these circumstances there is a continuous check to tyranny, should any such attempt to raise its head. Neglect these conditions, and liberty has no roots. It is like a cut flower which has no vitality in itself and does not last beyond the life it derived from the plant. The way is prepared for tyranny.

This is not to say that there are no economic and political problems peculiar to liberty itself, nor that liberty is not at times impaired by ignorance among a people whose religious values are intact. It is to stress the importance of maintaining the things on which liberty depends—and these are the things of religion. This foundation must be sound, but the structure erected on it must be sound, too.

Collectivist regimes, in the nature of things, must be profoundly irreligious, even to the extent of pressing a corrupted religion into service to shore up tyranny. Genuine religious experience entails the recognition of an inviolable essence in men, the human soul. It inculcates a sense of the worth and dignity of the person and breeds resistance to efforts to submerge individuals in the mass. Men whose personal experience convinces them that they are creatures of God will not become willing creatures of the State, nor attempt to make creatures of other men. For them, God is the Lord, Whose service is perfect freedom; and Caesar is the ruler, whom to serve is bondage.

Foundations of America

It was upon such a faith that the institutions of this country were founded. Those who migrated to these shores in the early days did not always see the full implications of their beliefs, and sometimes acted contrary to them. But in the end those beliefs prevailed, and they are recognizable in American institutions.

It has been fashionable of late to depreciate the motives of the men who made the early settlements on American shores, but the judgment made by Alexis de Tocqueville one hundred twenty years ago is nearer the truth. Writing of the men who established Plymouth colony, de Tocque-

ville said, ". . . it was a purely intellectual craving that called them from the comforts of their former homes; and in facing the inevitable sufferings of exile their object was the triumph of an idea."

This idea was one which had been spreading in England since even before the Reformation, but it bears more directly upon the time when the English people had, for the first time, the Bible in their own tongue. The idea of a new commonwealth, fired by reading in the Old Testament of the people of the covenant, launched in America what de Tocqueville described as "a democracy more perfect than antiquity had dared dream of." The first minister of the church in Boston in 1630 was John Cotton. Cotton Mather wrote of him, that he "propounded unto them an endeavor after a theocracy, as near as might be, to that which was the glory of Israel, the 'peculiar people'."

The Puritan regime, taken by itself, was pretty rigorous. But it matured, and in its maturity received an infusion from something radically different—the rationalism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment by itself in France ran its course and became its own caricature. It teamed up with a revolution at the end of which was—Napoleon. But in America the seemingly diverse elements fused. Here, we conceived the idea of a limited government under a written Constitution; the idea of a separation of powers in the federal government and a retention of sovereignty in important spheres by the individual states; the concept of the immunity of persons from arbitrary encroachment by government. An experiment based on these principles was launched on these shores less than two centuries ago. It was the result of a conscious effort to forge an instrumentality of government in conformity with the Higher Law, based on the widely-held conviction that God is the Author of liberty. Our political liberties were not born in a vacuum, but among a people who had a sense of their unique destiny under God.

So long as men accepted the basic affirmations of re-

ligion—that there is a God of all people with Whom each individual has a personal relationship—our liberties were basically secure. Whenever there was a breach in them, we possessed a principle by which we could discover and repair the breach. But when there ceases to be a constant recurrence of fundamental principles, our political freedom is placed in jeopardy. Political liberty is not self-sustained; it rests upon a religious base.

All men desire to be free, and the will to be free is perpetually renewed in each individual who uses his faculties and affirms his manhood. But the mere desire to be free has never saved any people who did not know and establish the things on which freedom depends—and these are the things of religion. The God-concept, when cherished in the values of a people, is the universal solvent of tyranny, for, as Job said, "He looseth the bond of kings." (Job 12:18)

APPENDIX

Socialism in the Churches—A Chronological Survey, 1848-1950

Section I—ENGLAND

1848—Founding of "Christian Socialism" by F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley. Aim: To vindicate for "the Kingdom of Christ" its "true authority over the realms of industry and trade," and "for socialism its true character as the great Christian revolution of the 19th century." Wished to replace competition with cooperation and sharing in social life. Antecedents largely English; little if any Marxist influence. Failure of Chartism may have been a factor in launching this new movement. Sponsored cooperatives; founded a workingmen's college in 1854. Christian Socialism was one of the roots of Fabianism.

1877—Stewart Headlam founded the (Anglo-Catholic) *Guild of St. Matthew.*

1889—*Christian Social Union* founded by several Church of England clergymen, prime movers being Westcott and Gore.

Christian Socialist slogan came into existence at about this times: "Christianity is the religion of which Socialism is the practice."

Christian Socialist League founded in the 1880's.

1906—*Church Socialist League*

1914—*Fellowship of Reconciliation*

1919—*Industrial Christian Fellowship*

Socialist Christian League operated among the free churches of Great Britain during the 1920's.

The Christian Left, an organization founded

around John MacMurray and others flourished during the 1930's. It produced the symposium entitled "Christianity and the Social Revolution," edited by Lewis, Polyani, and Kitchin, a book which offers communism as the heir to the Christian tradition. *The Christian Left* believed in "the religious mission of the working class to achieve socialism."

1941—Malvern Conference of the Church of England. Pronounced in favor of socialistic reforms.

1942—Council of Clergy and Ministers for Common Ownership.

(For an extended early history see "Christian Socialism" by C. E. Raven. For a broader and equally sympathetic survey of the movement from the beginning to the present, see "From Maurice to Temple" by M. B. Reckitt. This book comprises the Holland Lectures for 1946, published on a fund established to bring out books on Christianity and the social order. The first book in the series, and still the most famous, is R. H. Tawney's "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism."

Section II—AMERICA

1870—The Social Gospel "was called into being by the impact of modern industrial society and scientific thought upon the Protestantism of the United States during the half century following the Civil War." (C. H. Hopkins) One of its later leaders defined it as "the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions . . . as well as to individuals." (Shailer Matthews)

1889—*Episcopal Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor.*

1889—Founding of the *Society of Christian Socialists* in Boston around W. D. P. Bliss, a Congregationalist

minister. Aim: "To show that the aim of Socialism is embraced in the aims of Christianity." The first issue of its journal "The Dawn" stated, "Business itself today is wrong. . . . It is based on competitive strife for profits. But this is the exact opposite of Christianity. . . . We must change the system."

1892—*Brotherhood of the Kingdom* founded around Walter Rauschenbush and two other Baptist ministers.

1902—Publication of Washington Gladden's "Social Salvation."

1903—Presbyterian Department of Church and Labor of the Board of Home Missions.

1906—*The Christian Socialist Fellowship,* "a Fellowship of brothers and comrades pledged to the support of the International Socialist movement as the means of hastening the good time of God and Man which we believe to be very near at hand." Its journal, "The Christian Socialist," had 2000 clergyman subscribers by 1909; 20,000 ten years later.

1907—Publication of Walter Rauschenbush's "Christianity and The Social Crisis."

1907—*Methodist Federation for Social Service.*

1908—*The Federal Council of Churches.* "The climax of official recognition of social Christianity was attained in the organization of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in 1908. The significance was two fold. Not only was the social gospel acknowledged in an impressive manner by this most representative body in American Protestant history, but social action itself was one of the important factors that brought the Federal Council into being." (C. H. Hopkins)

"The social expectations of the Social Gospel leaders were not untypical of the age. . . . The organization of the Methodist Federation for Social Service in 1907 and the Federal Council of Churches in 1908 reflected these purposes and gave institutional form to efforts for their realization." (Liston Pope)

1911—Episcopal *Church Socialist League.*

1915—*Fellowship of Reconciliation.*

1919—*Church League for Industrial Democracy.*

1932—*National Religion and Labor Foundation.* Works closely with and receives part of its support from Walter Reuther and the C.I.O.

1932—*Fellowship of Socialist Christians;* prime mover, Reinhold Niebuhr.

1934—*Fellowship of Southern Churchmen.*

1936—*United Christian Council for Democracy* a "means of communication for left wing organizations" in the several denominations.

1950—Launching of *Christian Action;* largely under the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, John C. Bennett and Liston Pope. Formed of remnants of the Fellowship of Socialist Christians. Publishes quarterly, "Christianity and Society."

1950—Formation of *The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America;* a multi-purpose organization whose weight, on social questions, is on the side of further socialization.

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